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illustration 3

Fumitoshi Hizen

肥前文俊



Chapter 24 – The Development Project

The discussion concerning the onward development of the village didn't take place at the table inside the tribal chief's house, like it would usually, but in the open space under the clear sky.

The heads of the village gathered around the single sheet of woodblock pasted together.

A rough map, which was drawn using charcoal, was seen on this big woodblock.

In the center of the village, there was a double circled house representing the tribal chief's house.

South of it, houses in the form of dots were placed bit by bit, including the house of Eiji and Tanya.

In front of the village, there was an expanding forest and the path which lead to the Tal village far off from the Siena.

Collaborative field lands, which used new farming methods, stretched along the east side. In front of them was the flowing river, and beside it, the blacksmith's workshop.

To the west, the stretching mountain, rich in iron ore and clay, could be seen. Whereas in the northern part, there was an area used for wood lumbering together with the public cemetery.

Despite calling it a village, each building was separated far apart, not to mention the households near the suburbs, where fellow families hardly saw each other.

Everyone's faces gathered, focusing and questioning Eiji about the development hereafter.

Well then, where should I start working from? – he wondered.

Eiji, who retrieved his lost memories, didn't know in detail, but, he would hit upon many ideas, which seemed to be effective and profitable.

However, just saying "let's begin" won't yield result the next day.

Because of that, it was necessary to arrange preparations, make

use of the effort, build up a plan, and wait for the outcome. Eiji couldn't anticipate exactly how long it would take; therefore, he had set up a criterion as the condition of the development.

Eiji named it as the effect of compound interest^[1] in the development. He didn't care whether the effects of the development would pile up little by little in amount.

In exchange, it would open possibilities of yielding results one after another within a short period of time.

Like that, wouldn't that make life become more pleasant, allow more place for free time, and increase the speed of the development?

Perhaps a big development would generate great profits; nevertheless, during that time, the size of the labor force would reduce and the life would become financially stringent.

In the first place, it was a poor lifestyle, where one wouldn't know what kind of tomorrow awaits.

Once the weather turned worse, it would lower the amount of produced crops, becoming enough of a reason to make one suffer from famine.

Eiji knew that such big development in the lifestyle would be the same betting all-in in a disadvantageous gamble.

The development, which was now in effect, consisted of three elements, i.e.: land reclamation, reformation of farming methods, as well as replacement of bronze tools with the iron-made ones.

– Well then, provided that we continue the reclamation of the land this way, how about the rest?

– I think turning the soap into a standard good for trading purpose will be a good idea, so I should become able to make it regularly.

– It would be nice if we could increase the number of goods for exchange, wouldn't it?

– I need people in order to produce more lumber.

Hearing Bona's question, it was natural for Jane to put forward her suggestion.

Because only Eiji and Pietro knew about the method of producing the soap, the exchange ratio was high.

Furthermore, considering that it only requires replenishing the stock of livestock's fat, it made the cost unusually cheap.

A great amount of the soap was regularly requested as a trading good by the villages which specialized in cloth production, not only for hygiene purpose, but also as a detergent for their production.

And the even greater reason, it was significant in reducing the number of lice and fleas. Eiji completely agreed on that matter.

Eiji thought that even telling the method of their making would be fine, but Jane, Mike, and Fernando were against that idea.

They justified it by saying that he was too friendly in giving away profits by simply telling other people.

The one who mentioned needing more people was Philip.

It was said that the amount of consumption was raised due to Eiji's smithing works. Because of that, Philip, who was in charge of supplying the whole village with lumber, had it tough.

Therefore, it was decided that children, who currently had no specified job, would be deployed to help.

– Eiji, you probably still have lots of ideas, don't you? Was it a horseshoe that you mentioned?

– It's an item which you attach to a horse's hoof.

Eiji explained the construction of the horseshoe.

However, Eiji, who regained a rough knowledge regarding iron-made products, could understand the trouble of completing it.

Back in pre-war days, when horses were commonly used, there were many blacksmiths who specialized in making horseshoes.

It was a kind of a delicate job, enough for covering their life necessities. Of course, it was still far better than doing nothing, nevertheless, due to their half-hearted skills, it was not possible to draw out the full potential of the horses.

– Are you thinking about anything else?

– I was thinking about a cattle shed.... This would gather and house all those privately owned livestock from the other families.

– Is there a sense in gathering them in one place?

-There is. Right now, we are living under the same roof with the wild boars while raising them. Everyone does so as well, right?

– We do.

– I wonder if would be similar to my house, where I have someone raise the livestock.

– Tribal chief's house would be an exception, wouldn't it? By gathering cattle^[2] and horses into one place and assigning specialized people to raise them, every household would earn lots of time. Again, it will make collecting horse and cattle dung easier, as well as creating compost. On top of that, you will get more space, which you can use to arrange your house, and not just that, it will help prevent us, who are living together with livestock, from falling into sickness. I see it like this.

– Why do you say it will help prevent us from getting sick?

Eiji explained, not only to Jane but the rest of members.

Because the people, whom he had to deal with, had no knowledge about microorganism and germs, it was hard for Eiji to explain in detail about hygiene, therefore, he couldn't get them to understand.

In the end, he managed to convince them by using beings, such as gods and evil as an example, which was the easiest way to have them believe.

The reason why Eiji wished for a cattle shed was due to his intention of maintaining a hygienic life, as well as him wanting to prevent them from falling into any illness, even if it was just a little.

Furthermore, if the land reclamation progresses, the amount of fodder will increase, which will result in raising more cattle and horses, boosting the livestock productivity at the same time. If you repeat the same process of land reclamation again, you could expect the virtuous circle to continue.

Eiji thought about conducting this experiment on a small scale first. Even if it were to fail, the effects could be reversed.

– It seems that Eiji can understand things that are not comprehensible for me; however, I guess I understand what his intentions are. The only thing remaining for you to do would be to precisely list out the detail of the talk, such as how you plan to build the shed in practice, as well as place where it should be build and the methods, which you are going to apply.

– I think, as for chickens, it should be fine to enclose them inside of a fence, outside the house.

– There shouldn't be anyone considering the walking distance to be troublesome in collecting eggs.

– Later, I believe it will be necessary to construct a small cabin in the watermill near my workshop, so as to use the watermill for powder grinding. After that, we should probably replace every house's roof with tiles, instead of the straw-thatched one currently in use.

– And this tile is?

– It's a board-shaped item made from the burned earth. Once we pile them up, they can protect us from the rains. Because tiles don't rot, there's no need to spent time drying them, like in case of straw-thatched roofing.

– Wouldn't that increase the burden for the carpenter?! Recently, I've become able to use Thomas, but it's not much, so it doesn't seem like we can do that as well, you see.

Once Eiji finished explaining the role of tiles, Fernando raised his voice in panic.

From his face, you could tell he didn't have much spare time.

Nevertheless, Eiji shook his head while denying him.

– Indeed carpenters have it tough with the amount of jobs, but the farmers are too troubled with the land reclamation now.

– In addition to Eiji, who's in charge of supervising and smithing, everyone is busy. It's not just you. (Bona's accent)

– Even If I'm told so, together with Thomas we have only 2 pair of hands. It's only natural to not be able to do the impossible.

– Well, wouldn't it be nice to find some people that are free during winter?

– That's it! Mike, you said something rare coming from you.

– Certainly, our blockhead can come up with good ideas, which doesn't suit him at all.

– Hey, were you praising me or slandering me, which one was it?!

– I wonder.

– Yes.

As Jane and Fernando were evasive with their answers, Mike began to press them with his questions.

Eiji watched it attentively as a smile appeared on his face.

– Because my suggestion was the best, I want you to praise me more naturally.

– Yeah yeah, that was great.

– Even the tribal chief!?

Eiji knew it.

Mike would desperately hunt wild beasts in order to preserve the livestock, even if it was just a little.

Not only that, he also gets along with the other farmers and makes sure that the communication is exacted[continued?], as well as helping the management go smoothly.

At time of crisis, he would stand in front and bear the blunt of any criticism and dissatisfaction.

Because everyone knows it, he was standing where he was.

Eiji thought about trying to rely on him.

If he were to rely on everyone who has gathered in this place, he should be able to overcome whatever the hurdle it is.

For that reason, Eiji was resolute in properly observing and managing the people in this village.

For instance, were he to observe the way in which Philip conducts his work, he should definitely be able to assist Philip by making tools and coming up with a plan.

In front of things one ought to do, there was no anxiety for Eiji.

Notes

1. interest gained from the previous interest placed on the money, for more info: [wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compound_interest). Pay attention, especially, to the first paragraph.
2. The japanese word 'ushi' can be generally used to describe any cattle related animals. Because of that, I sometimes used cows, and sometimes oxen, which was wrong by me. Sorry for that.

Chapter 25 – Nail Clippers and Scissors

Despite Eiji leading the development plan, he still had his usual things to do.

After all, there was no way for him to forget about his own craft, which was smithing.

Recently, it had become colder.

Because the winter was approaching, Eiji would soon reach the limit when striking the iron.

The precious time, which he could spend and enjoy on manufacturing in the workshop, had increased as well.

On top of the grindstone soaked with water, Eiji made the small lump of iron glide.

Once he squinted his eyes, he checked the edge of the blade.

Still not sharp enough? – thought Eiji.

After confirming its edge one more time, he put it on the grindstone.

The hissing sound of continuous rubbing was heard.

Pietro, who was watching Eiji's work, made a mysterious face while staring at it.

– Master, what's that?

– That's a nail clipper.

– Nail clipper? Judging from its name, is it a tool for clipping nails?

– It will be probably faster to explain it in practice. Pietro, would you reach out your hand?

– Yes.

Snap, snap – together with the sound, Pietro's nails were cut.

He opened widely his eyes while having the expression of being amazed on his face.

– Did master come up with this....?

– No, that wasn't me. It's an item from the world I originally came.

– The person that came up with this must be a genius.

As expected, this would be the natural reaction.

Due to the nature of Eiji's job, he had the tendency of checking the

structure of an iron-made item whenever there was one nearby. The nail clipper was a simple tool consisting of the top and bottom blade, applying the fundamental rule of a lever and a spring.

He remembered himself admiring it, the first time he learned of its principle.

As far as Eiji knew, there was no such thing as a nail clipper in this village.

When he asked the people how they cut their nails, they would answer him by saying that they used their teeth to bite it, and then adjusted it by using a file. Otherwise, they would use a knife or and scissors to cut the nail tip.

Whichever way was used, there was a danger of damaging one's finger tips due to irregular section caused by using knives and scissors.

It was a story from quite a long time ago, when Eiji noticed his nails extending. However, because there were lots of other things to do, he had to postpone the idea of making a nail clipper.

- I guess you would think of the person who created this tool as a genius, wouldn't you.
- Being able to create it just from looking, Master is amazing too.
- It's probably 'cause I like to make things, you see.
- Is it fine for me to borrow this?
- I had quite a trouble making this one, so it's fine, as long as you handle them carefully.
- I'm going to show this to mum and dad.

While making a small object, it's important to be delicate in one's work.

Especially, when it comes to a nail clipper's blade part, which has to be curved, and can't be adjusted by using forging methods, such as striking.

It's necessary to splice it out using a sharp-edged tool with great hardness.

It would be possible to do without using that; however, a fine tool was still required.

Eiji thought that it was painful for him to be unable to make a forging tool to such extent.

He wanted to increase the number of different forging tools quickly. If making large objects requires physical strength, then making small ones needs delicacy.

Nonetheless, it requires lots of troubles.

The people of Siena had a biased tendency of evaluating items, regardless of whether they were large numbers of ornaments, big useless items, or small objects.

Taking that into account, the nail clipper would be received as valuable and indispensable item for every household, just like iron pots and needles.

This too, should be told about and considered as the main product of the village.

Recently, there was one more iron-made item highly regarded by Eiji.

That was a pair of scissors, which could be also used for hair cutting.

Human hair is hard and numerous.

For that reason, the bronze-made scissors would chip and lose their sharpness quickly. Not to mention, it would cause problems, like pulling out hair whenever it had a faulty sharpness, making it painful for the person receiving the haircut.

The first prototype made by Eiji was tested by Jane and received high praises from her.

– Master, are you not going to make scissors while separating between ingot^[1] and steel?

– Yeah. Separating the tender ingot and hard steel is also one of the methods, but perhaps it will wear out quickly?

– Well, I think that there's someone in village who wants to have a haircut every day, so there should be no problem.

– We are going to cut lots of people's hair, you see. Therefore, there's a risk it will cause injury. That's why we will make it wholly from steel, so that whenever we sharpen it, we can use it for many dozens of years. Saying that, we will use several types of iron without discretion. Pietro, I know it will be troublesome, but, do your best in assisting me.

– Please leave it to me.

A pair of scissors made from the highest quality metal and used for

hair cutting is usually expensive.

As far as Eiji knew, its price would exceed 100 thousand yen.^[2]

It was a high grade product, which couldn't be afforded even by a novice with the right qualification.

What Eiji tried to make was pair of scissors with the sharpness that could match the ones above.

His workshop facility was inferior in comparison with the ones in the present times; nevertheless, Eiji believed that he would probably have enough confidence in making them now.

He became quite capable of grasping things, which he couldn't understand so far until now, such as maintaining the temperature of the furnace, or the way to tell apart the steel material that he made.

Eiji should be able to make it.

The finely crushed charcoal piled up inside the furnace.

Once he began to operate the pair of bellows, the charcoal turned red, making rumbling sounds.

Because Eiji's intention was to eye the fire, the interior of the workshop was dim, leaving only the light of the burning charcoal illuminating his face.

Even though the winter was fast approaching, the inside of the room remained hot, which made him sweat.

Contrary to Eiji, who was used to his daily routine for many years, Pietro was wiping his sweat from his face while getting drenched.

Eiji wiped his face from time to time using his arm only for the new portion of sweats to break out and go along his face.

He didn't entrust Pietro with a grinding task, instead Eiji planned to have him help with his work. In exchange, he would let Pietro observe and study next to him how the furnace works.

His apprentice's eyes were radiating at this rare opportunity. Even if it was just a little, Pietro would study with a serious expression on his face.

– Will it be finished soon?

– That's wrong. Pay more attention to the color of the iron. Its shade has to turn just a bit whiter.

– Yes.

– You are going to bear this much in your mind.

– Understood.

Once the temperature of the furnace has reached around 1000°Celsius, Eiji would put the steel material inside.

Placing the charcoal on top of it, the heat began to transfer quickly.

There was a difference in the temperature between the soft iron and the hard one.

Eiji would see through its temperature by judging from a single factor, which was the color.

He could do that because it was based on his intuitional movements, coming from his mass of experience.

After he made sure the steel achieved the perfect temperature, Eiji took it out from the furnace and adjusted its shape, using the water-powered hammer.

Until this moment, there was no need for Pietro to assist.

So as to prepare the steel for the forge welding, Eiji adjusted its shape, smeared it with straw ashes, and covered it in mud.

It was the right substance for making two pieces of iron attach well during the forge welding.

If it were to be Eiji's present days, then the iron powder would be used and mixed together with boric acid and borax; nevertheless, applying the traditional making method, it was enough to attach iron with straw ashes.

Since excellent swords were made that way by everyone, history should be enough proof that there was no problem.

Now it was time to overlap the heated up steel material by striking it from above.

Eiji entrusted the hammer to Pietro, whose practice training began from now.

He understood Pietro being nervous as he felt it coming from handing Pietro the hammer.

While Pietro was shaking till the tip of his shoulders, he struck and drew out^[3] the lump of the steel, which lay on the anvil, generating sounds that resembled that of a chime.

The heated steel wasn't that hard.

It would be enough to strike with moderate strength, rather than using one's full power.

- Pay attention so that it stretches regularly.
- Yes.
- Once the spots appear, the quenching cracks will likely occur. Move it a bit to this part.
- Yes!

In exchange, striking it regularly will become essential.

As the steel is struck at its heated state, the distribution of the particles will become regular.

After that, the process of quenching^[4] will be performed so as to increase the hardness of steel. At that point however, the particle distribution will create spots and change the rate of expansion, making the steel to split.

Once the phenomenon called quenching crack occurs^[5], the whole work will become futile.

The success and failure depended wholly on the moment of reaction from a blacksmith.

Because of that, one had to forge the steel carefully.

- How many layers are we going to put together this time?
 - There are 5 types of iron which differs in the number of carbon. With 1 folding back you will create 10 layers, if so, how many will you create with 5 times of folding?
 - Ehm...2 times give 20 something, so....it would be around 160 something of layers?^[6]
 - Making you calculate each time, you have become quite fast, haven't you? That's right. By doing it like this, even if the surface of the blade reduces, its sharpness won't become dull, as there will be always the next layer. It's troublesome to fold it back using human strength, but that number of folds should be enough.
- Even though he could only raise the mallet to his shoulder level, it was still quite heavy.
- Pietro was still at the same age as Eiji at his middle school years. The fatigue gradually accumulated, making Pietro unable to raise his arms. He was soon at his limit.
- His breathing became irregular and his sweat started to gush out continuously.

- Good, now, so as to watch the rest—

- But, I can still do it!
- It's fine not to push yourself. Rather than that, it's important to watch and remember how the work goes.
- Understood.

Eiji made Pietro, who was trying to continue the job, drank water and rested.

His words were filled with confidence; nevertheless, Pietro was probably at his limit.

Once he was made to rest, he wouldn't try to repeat that action.

Pietro was still young, therefore, he shouldn't force himself; still, his determination was pleasant.

Eiji still had to do the forge welding, using the water-powered hammer, and the back folding.

As he stretched and folded up the steel, he joined the layers together, making it into a single thin object.

The layers of the steel were created, gaining a texture with a pattern similar to waves.

- Good, we are now proceeding into the shaping.
- Yes!
- Once the steel is properly red, it will become soft enough. So as not to let it cool down, we have to swing fast and precisely using the small mallet while changing it into the desirable shape.

First, you open a small hole on the part of the grip and continue to expand it.

When you strike it lightly, in order to draw a circle, a smooth and curved surface will be created within a blink of time.

This procedure used to fail lots of times in the past.

For that reason, high proficiency was usually required so as to maintain an unconcerned conduct.

It would probably take many years, before one could turn the curved surface into the desirable shape.

However, Eiji could do it easily now.

Creating small finger holes, and amending the figure so that it matches the shape of the hand.

Attaching the holes, in which the blades joined together, and executing the process of annealing and quenching. Then checking

the temperature of the water.

It was quite warm.

Using the heat coming from the furnace, Eiji added hot water from the heated kettle.

The temperature turned hot.

Seeing how Pietro checked the temperature of the water in the same manner, Eiji laughed while thinking that he would lose his arm if it was him long time ago.

No matter how a great product you made, as long as the quenching and tempering are incomplete, the product will worsen.

Depending on the blacksmith, these two procedures are the most crucial things, more than forging or the iron itself.

A blacksmith is bound to make a display of skills whenever there's an opportunity, but at the same time, he should possess a part of a knowledge which he ought to hide.

However crude the iron is, as long as the skills of the maker were complete, that person could make considerably many items.

The quality of the iron is just one of the factors needed to make a good item.

It was a work that required lots of concentration.

Once Eiji grabbed the scorching piece of steel with the tongs, he put it in the water, making it to generate vapor in a blink of an eye.

– We did it!

– Yeah. Even if we used the water-powered hammer, it would still be fine, but did it become a worthy experience for you?

– Yes! I've got the feeling, like I was able to understand smithing just a little.

– That's good. I left the grinding tasks in your care, so when you master them, I shall tell you more.

-I'll do my best!

In the case of forging products, in order to make the parts, such as a handle, smooth, there are many spots which require the application of grinding.

After that, it was necessary to make a shallow cavity called the rear side gap at the reverse side of the blade called 'Hizoko'.

It was an important part needed to make the sharpness of the scissors easy to control.

Indeed, there was no way for Eiji to entrust Pietro with this task. Once Pietro took a small break, he enthusiastically started his sharpening training.

While watching that appearance of his, Eiji relaxed his attention and stretched his body.

His arm muscles felt quite comfortable compared to before.

It seemed that Eiji's body finally became accustomed to this lifestyle.

– Well then, should I make 1 more pair of scissors before the furnace cools down?

It took him nearly 2 hours to make a single pair of scissors.

Even if he were to start from the morning, the day would finish with him making only 3-4 pairs of them.

– The first pair of scissors was a common one, so let's make the next one thinning scissors.

Eiji had the memory of once seeing the thinning scissors.

One side of it was a blade whereas another side had a form similar to a comb.

After it was first forged into a regular shape, you would use a chisel to make notches, so as to form the comb part.

Having a pair of thinning scissors should reduce the work involved in haircutting.

Choosing the type of iron which he intends to use in making, Eiji again braced himself.

– Hairdressing?

– Yes. I developed a new pair of scissors for hairdressing purposes, so I was thinking about asking Tanya-san's opinion.

– Hmm... If it's only the tips of the hair....

Eiji, who returned back to his house, considered testing the sharpness of the scissors on his wife's hair.

Her hair was perfectly beautiful and showed signs of being charming, silky, and supple.

Eiji knew that this was due to Tanya diligently combing her hair.

Her cleanly kept hair created lightly a web while extending from the

tips of her shoulders till the scapula.

Tanya, who went out to the front of the house, turned her back toward Eiji, making it easier for him to cut her hair.

As always, her hair was lovely.

Her hair was black, but turned slightly red from the evening sunlight. Eiji understood that.

The moment Eiji stuck the hair through the comb, he made it become smooth.

While he kept combing it, he cut the gathered hair's tips with the scissors.

Snip snip – together with the small sound of cutting, the light response coming from the scissors was quite unexpected.

Tanya's hair was cut as it fluttered in the air.

Eiji trimmed the hair sequentially from its ends little by little.

Changing freely the hairstyle using one's own hand, it was an interesting piece of experience for him.

After the trim was finished as planned, he distanced himself.

Tanya's haircut was the Japanese-styled one.

– How did it go?

– It turned increasingly charming.

– Oh my, Eiji's hair has also grown quite long, hasn't it? Shall I do a haircut for you?

– Will it go well?

– I think it should be fine without me having to force myself. I haven't cut hairs before, but....

Her words make me feel anxious, I guess... – he thought.

Come now – as Eiji was urged to turn his back.

Snip snip – Eiji felt when his hair was cut together with the sound. The hair fluttered in the air while falling.

– Ah...

– W-what's the matter?

– No... It's nothing.

– Really?

– I've got everything under my control.

Her eyes were averted, which made Eiji feel a bad premonition rising inside of him.

Tanya continued the haircut again, using the scissors.

For a while, Eiji thought that the haircut went smoothly, then another voice filled with uneasiness was heard.

– Ah...

– Wait a moment, are you really fine there, Tanya?!

– Fine, it's fine! I'm adjusting it, because I cut a little bit too much on the left side.

–If you're forcing yourself, I'll entrust this task to someone else, so please tell me sooner.

– It feels painful to be distrusted like this.

– Urgh. Being told that way, I can't oppose.

As Eiji couldn't help but to prepare himself, his hair fell vigorously and scattered in the air.

It felt as though the amount of cut hair was greater than normal.

The silence continued for a while.

At that time, his bad premonition became real.

Tanya pointed her voice toward Eiji, with a timid look.

– Err...

– Yes?

–.....

– Are you done?

– No... I'll call Jane-san, so please, can I have you wait?

– ...Understood.

Eiji was prepared; He was supposed to be.

There was no occasion where he wished to have a mirror more than now.

Can't I make glass using any object around me? – is what he thought.

He knew there was a bronze-made mirror at the trial chief's house, but it's a wonder whether he could properly understand his appearance with it.

Waiting for Tanya and Jane to arrive, Eiji had to endure the chilly wind hitting his skin.

A short while later, Jane appeared, having her arm grabbed by

Tanya.

Not understanding what was happening at all, Jane had a trouble face.

- Calling out people suddenly, what's the matter?
- Please help, Eiji-san is...
- What?! Did something happen to him?...What on.... What's that hair?!

Once Jane saw his hair, she became surprised only to laugh the next moment while holding her stomach.

- Ahahaha! It looks like a distorted face.
- Please don't laugh at him like that. It's not because I wanted this to happen.
- No, sorry. I'll turn him into a handsome man, so cheer up.

Tanya still felt guilty.

While having his hair trimmed by Jane, he thought – I will not entrust haircutting to a novice anymore – to himself.

Without any big trouble, they spent their days peacefully and uneventful.

Notes

1. When I browsed for the meaning of the Japanese word 'Jigane', I received 2 alternatives – unprocessed metal/ore and ingot. Since the first one didn't match, I decided to go with the second option, but, according to [wiki](#), it denotes a metal which is shaped for further processing. Perhaps what they meant was not types of metals, but rather choose which way was better for making the tool.
2. around 830\$
3. The process of drawing out is called 'sunobe'. quoted from <http://www.ksky.ne.jp/~sumie99/sunobe.html> – 'In primary meaning, the word "SUNOBE" describes the process of drawing out the steel block to the length of the blade. The naming for such blade comes from its easy process of making, because the blade was made up without fold welding work. For modern steel such process is not necessary.'
4. : It appears that both tempering and quenching can be used for hardening a

metal, but, both of them are different process. If someone can grasp how they differ, I'd be thankful for an explanation <.<

5. Cracks made due to the tension generated from Quenching.
6. Here is what Ace suggested – 5 times 2 to the power of 5 gives 160 ($5 \cdot 2^5$), where number of layers $\cdot 2^{\text{number of folds}}$.

Chapter 26 – The Lumber

In order to make a village develop, what kind of lifestyle must the villagers lead? What kind of tools would help?

Eiji, who had begun this sort of investigation, moved toward his first direction, Philip's place.

Besides Tanya, Philip was the person who has offered the most cooperation for Eiji since the beginning.

Were it not for him, Eiji wouldn't have been able to make the furnace, nor find the iron ores.

Furthermore, it was probably troublesome for him to provide Eiji with lumber as a source of fuel.

That fact, however, hadn't changed even after Eiji acquired the position of a blacksmith.

He wanted to become this village's strength as much as possible, and supposedly be able to make use of his own skills and wisdom.

While bracing himself, Eiji climbed the riverbank, going toward the forester's lodge. He could feel that the atmosphere was changing.

The scent of the grass turned into the one coming from the forest. Together with the cries of bugs and birds, the sounds of wild animals pushing through the bushes were reverberating.

It seemed as though the velvet from the leaf mold was running along the sides of the path little by little, instead of the grass.

As he continued to climb the slope, his body temperature increased. Sweating inside his overcoat and breathing out the air from exhaustion, Eiji finally reached the destination.

In front of the barn, a single cow was standing same as the previous time.

Even though the weather was quite chilly, the cow continued to eat the grass with its usual appearance.

Its rotund eyes grasped Eiji and wouldn't separate from him.

Not even the slightest sign of caution could be felt from it.

The cow seemed to be taking kindly to people, and its tail was swinging side to side.

...Speaking of which, recently I haven't a chance to taste a steak – he thought while having the image of a piping hot steak overlapping with the cow in front of his eyes.

The cow was shivering from fear, which Eiji noticed.

– Sorry, sorry. I don't plan to eat you.

– moo.

Standing right in front of the cow, which backed off, trembling with fear, Eiji gazed at the barn.

There were numerous logs piled up in rows inside the barn, whereas next to them, the ones with removed branches were accumulated.

The wood characteristic fragrance, which was pleasant, hung in the air near Eiji's vicinity.

As he took a deep breath, it seemed as though his heart was calmed down.

Together with the rustling sound of grass, a big object was drawing near him.

At first, Eiji was able to prepare himself, thinking it was a big bear; nevertheless, what appeared from between the trees was Philip, who had a nata hanging from his waist and shouldered a hatchet.

What's more, there was a straw rope tied to his waist, pulling wood behind him.

-L-Long time no see.

– Long time no see Philip-san. That's an incredible amount of wood, isn't it? Is that what you've just felled.

– No. I left all of these to dry three days ago, so as to make them become lighter.

Rustle rustle – the sound of the rustling grass could be heard as the lumber was sliding and rolling.

Had he been pulling all of that alone...? It was a tremendous power coming from his legs and loins.

Philip, who hadn't been seen for a long time, looked big as always.

His almost 2 meter height gave out the impression of the existence which could overwhelm whatever stood in its way.

While moving his scraggly beard near his mouth, Philip spoke.

– Because the amount of wood has increased, there is not enough time to let the lumber rest.

- It's because of me, isn't it? I'm sorry for that.
- ...Fine. That's fine. Thanks to that, my tool was improved.
- Since then, how has it felt while using the hatchet?
- Truly nice. Still, it's inconvenient when I have to cut down trees with slanted surfaces.
- That's because it's not double-edged, isn't it? I'll make it this time.

Philip, who was trying to endure while saying 'I look forward to it', smiled with his whole face.

It was sort of a pristine smile, where his intimidating air vanished like a joke.

Wasn't that unfair? If someone were to be given such a smile, they would become motivated, wanting to make the tool quickly.

Even craftsmen are humans.

Despite Eiji working with all his might on a daily basis, he couldn't resist.

Because it was rare for Eiji to receive such a genuine evaluation for his tools, he wanted to respond to Philip's glad reaction.

- After cutting trees, how do you process them?
- I use the hatchet to cut branches, and then peel off the bark with a scythe.
- How do you split the wood?
- Here.

Philip showed his execution in practice.

What he held in his hands were a wooden hammer and a bronze-made wedge.

As he stood in front of the log with its bark removed, he carefully watched it. The atmosphere froze for a moment.

What is he looking at? – wondered Eiji.

Thinking suspiciously, Eiji couldn't convert his thoughts into the words. Philip focused all his nerves on the log.

The silence continued for a moment. While moving around the log, he continued to observe the log. Eiji could finally predict what Philip was looking for.

He was observing the grain of the wood.

The so-called annual tree ring doesn't consist of regular circle intervals. Depending on the object, its circles can twist and incline,

running while meandering.

Once Philip fixedly put the log near his leg, he gently placed the wedge on it.

Kon kon – together with the sound of the wood, he slightly drove in the wedge with unexpectedly quick movements.

Changing places, the sound of the wood hammer echoed several times, just like the wedge.

While confirming the places, Philip nodded to himself each time there was no problem and swung again with the wooden hammer. The slightly driven wedge began to deepen.

After he drove more than a halfway, Philip distanced himself from the log.

– With this, we will lay it down for one evening. If we leave it alone, it will split on its own.

– Will it split straightforwardly?

– Depending on the wood, it might not.

– What do you do in that case?

– We try not to cut it down as much as possible. The time needed to cut it down completely isn't that long, so we can choose when to cut it down straightforwardly or not.

– I see.

With many years of polishing the skills, perhaps one could guess the grain of the wood to a certain level, even if it's covered in bark.

Eiji approached the log and checked the wedge.

Depending on the difference in the atmospheric temperature, the wood swells and shrinks, which probably would cause it to split within a specific time. This technique is called split woodworking.

The head of the wedge was crushed and had the angle frayed due to it being unable to endure the blows, which piled up multiple times. It was probably because of the harmful result caused by the tender bronze.

– My father used a stone instead. Once it became my turn, I got this from the village.

– That's probably because the stone would immediately crack, wouldn't it?

With its simplistic form, it would wear off after few times of

processing.

In that case, there was something that Eiji could make.

Something that is easy to operate and would assist Philip, who had the tendency to place burden on objects.

What was needed was a saw after that.

Using a wedge to drive in a log was perhaps more efficient for the wood to split straightforwardly, just as Philip said.

However, using a saw would make the work be done within few minutes in comparison to this method.

Considering the time it takes to place a wedge on every single wood log, it was probably essential to choose the right method, which would match the lumber material, as well as taking into account its elasticity.

There is a tool called a framed pit saw. It's an insanely huge saw used by a type of workers known as sawyers, who also specialize in lumbering trees and processing it into wood. Since it's big, the length of its blade may even reach 1m.

The blade curves from its handgrip, making a shape of a ^ letter. Its thickness is about 3mm, whereas, its weight – 4 kilos. For people, who had never seen such a saw, it would be a rather surprising one.

Eiji handed the normal-type saw he made to Fernando. However, he rarely saw it in action, which makes it looks like a tool that is bound to be forgotten. Were it not for Eiji seeing the actual working scenery now, he probably wouldn't be able to recall it. That's why, it was crucial for him to move around the tools from time to time.

Grasping the meaning of studying and observing other's jobs more and more, Eiji became ready to carry out the advanced preparations for the next tool for Philip.

Suddenly, Philip's gaze moved away from Eiji.

Just what he was looking at – while he thought so, a person was climbing the bottom of the slope.

As the distance kept reducing, it became clear that it was Fernando.

– Oh, isn't that Eiji?

– Fernando-san, it's rare to meet you here.

– That would probably be your case. I often come here. Even though Philip supplies me with the right lumber, I still have to select them,

you see. Today as well, I came at my own discretion to choose the lumber, which would become the right material for making beams and pillars of the cattle shed that you have suggested.

- By the way, what type wood are you looking for?
- The one from an oak tree.

Among the lumber stored inside the barn, it was the one with exceptional length.

Was it because it had been raised in favorable conditions? The lumber, which grew straightly, looked unusually stunning.

It was amazing. You could feel the divine strength coming from it.

If it was in the era from which Eiji came, the tree would probably be preserved due to its scarcity.

- You mean this one?...It is huge, isn't it?
- I wonder, how long did it take for it to grow?
- Probably around 300 something years.
- That's amazing. Fernando-san, where do you intend to use this oak?
- For beams. I wonder, was this length good enough for making pillars?
- Yes. It was sufficient for my household.
- But, was it intended for gathering all the village's cattle in one place?...It's going to become an unbelievably enormous thing.
- If you need wood, I'd rather you tell me earlier.
- How long will it actually take to build?
- If fast, half a year. Generally, it would take a whole year. In case of a long time – there are ones which take even 3 years.
- Do not fret. I don't cut the trees so as to match them to things I create. I construct buildings, which were once trees.

One could feel the spirit of a craftsman coming from Fernando's words.

He was a clever guy who had a tendency toward profits, but he knew how to be good-looking in situations like this.

He would usually complain no matter how difficult a request was; nevertheless, he would often get through his work properly.

- Furthermore, with a saw and a plane, whatever tree it is, the work

will progress smoothly.

Hearing Fernando's powerful words, Eiji became glad, knowing that it was something to be done thanks to his tools.

That was the first step of the cattle shed building plan.

Like that, the materials for beam construction were settled.

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Chapter 27 – The Arrival of Winter and Tanning

The fall deepened, the exhaled air became white, and the time of falling leaves continued to lapse.

And then, winter arrived.

The first thing that gave the sign of a changing season was the atmosphere.

The atmosphere, which was until now a bit dry, turned into one abundant with humidity. After that, the snow fell.

– Snow?

– The snow descended, which means it's time to suspend one's field work.

Bernard, who used the shimade hoe as a cane, wiped his sweat from his brow.

Even if it was cold due to the falling snow, the body would still heat up with exercise. Especially, if it's heavy labor, such as digging up soil during land reclamation.

Was it because of the chilly weather? The soil seemed to increase in stiffness.

– You seem to have freezing in this cold weather.

– Looks like it. The place where I had lived before was as well chilly, but....

Starting from the fur coat, which was given to him by Tanya, he later got his hands on a pair of leather gloves and a pair of leather trousers, all of which he received during the trade. Eiji felt the warmth wrapping around his whole body from their leather. Despite that, his face grew cold due to the nipping wind.

It would have been better, had he exercised his body instead of just being in charge of supervising.

– We have cleared quite a large part of the land, haven't we?

– That's right. Even though everyone was complaining at first, they

turned silent and continued to work the moment they realized that the buds began to sprout.

In front of Eiji's view, the reddish black soil stretched.

Unlike a wasteland, which is overgrown with weeds and trees, this field looked neat.

Up till this moment, lots of troubles had been involved.

Considering that Eiji had many hardships in assisting, perhaps, both Bernard and Giorgio had it even harder than him in practice, since they were doing the physical part of reclamation, which involved cutting down trees, digging out roots and stones, as well as removing small pebbles from the field.

In addition, they had to plow some parts of the field, which were unfavorable for planting seeds, with weeds and straw, so as to increase its fertility.

With that, however, they reached a point where they can rest.

It would be considered customarily to leave the field as it was due to the covering of snow in the winter.

– During the winter, what do you do instead of field work?

– Because the main trading good in this village is leather, we usually make shoes, sew gloves, or produce bags. Anyway, we can create anything using leather.

– That's amazing, isn't it?

– Later, we would help Fernando. As we have our hands free from farm works, it is fine to assist him with big building constructions, so we are often rounded up for that. Won't Eiji be called as well?

– I wonder about that?

Eiji had his schedule filled up as he planned to use this period for making whetstones, repairing small items, and arranging the necessary things for the onward development.

Drawing him for other tasks would probably be out of question.

Still, won't I be rounded up for the discussion regarding the plan of building the cattle shed? – While Eiji answered by himself to this question, Bernard laughed.

– Well, it might be a little bit harsh for you to deal with leather, so perhaps it would be better to help out Fernando, even if it means avoiding Mike, who forces others to assist him.

- Why is that? Since our households are next to each other, there's a high chance for him to call me out, but...
- What? There should be no problem for you to decline as long you take care of yourself.

I wonder if he's not going to tell me straightly. – thought Eiji.

Not being able to draw the answer he wanted, Eiji became a little irritated.

There was no particular reason for Eiji to dislike helping, still, if something serious was to happen, he would rather prepare himself beforehand.

Nevertheless, saying that dealing with leather is harsh, just what could it be?

It felt as though he couldn't imagine it.

- Leather, the leather. Should I pay attention to it?
- Even if you're troubled, calling you won't solve anything{?}[just thinking about it won't solve anything?]. It's best not to think about anything that will turn futile.
- Well, I guess that would be true.

Even though it seemed like there are many times the villagers try to do something futile, their sudden understanding of reasonable things turned out to be quite unexpected for Eiji, who was deeply impressed with that.

No matter how trivial a thing was, they would never regard it as futile. Even if it was a single grain of wheat, they would treat it preciously.

Assuming they waste a single grain each day, it would make 365 wheat seeds become lost each year. However, when talking about farm work, it doesn't just end with that.

By planting and growing a single seed, it would give more than 700 grains of wheat the next year.

———In that case, how much would it be in the next 10 years?

Despite being unable to calculate, the villagers understood deep inside their heart that it is a fearful loss which could affect their whole life.

These guys were able to predict the weather from judging the mountains and sky.

And even if they didn't possess any statistical knowledge regarding astronomy, they would still be able to grasp the calendar or tell the time of arrival for summer and winter.

Because if not, they wouldn't be able to grow their crops skillfully. One could only bow the head with admiration toward their experience.

- Hey, let's go back to do the preparations for the festival.
- Festival?
- Y-eah, the winter is arriving, be.^[1]
- Is it a festival dedicated to the arrival of winter?
- When did you expect it to happen?
- No, I thought that it would be around New Year's or Christmas.
- What's that?

Guess one would expect that.

While watching Bernard's face, which looked puzzled, Eiji could only consent.

Judging from the level of technology, it didn't appear to be the right period for the birth of Christ.

In that case, if one were to point out the criterion on which the calendar was based on, it would be the day of commemoration for the country's establishment. Thus, it was easy to tell when things like the winter is likely arrive.

And since there was no administrative body of the extent of a country, it wasn't strange to consider the arrival of winter.

- You really have changed, haven't you? Well, I guess it's fine to talk about fascinating topics using nothing but mysterious things, still...
- What should I be doing on that festival?
- If you know anything interesting, it's fine for you to share it with us. You can sing, play a music, or even dance. People would be pleased with cooking as well, be.

I see – he thought. If so, then there might be something he could do. Because cooking was part of both men's household, Eiji would be wholly in charge of making products.

Eiji wasn't skillful at making dishes typical of a man; nevertheless, he could cook fairly well.

However, there weren't many seasonings, which was a problem.

What could be made using only salt and herbs together with a limited amount of vegetables?

Pondering about what dish to prepare, Bernard bid farewell while apologizing for leaving first.

Why did something like this happen?

Not being able to ask or receive a piece of advice from Bernard, Eiji wanted to hit himself.

While he was about to cry, he raised his hand.

It was the house of Mike.

Inside the dark room, which had no windows to absorb the sunlight, there was a large amount of animal fur lining up.

One part was soaking inside a water jug, another – drying, yet another part in front of his eyes was affixed with pins.

Eiji was made to assist in the process of tanning.

– Hey Eiji. A fine adult man isn't bound to cry, so work using your hands.

– I got it!

Whose fault do you think it is that I'm crying? – he thought.

Eiji held in his hand a spoon related tool, which seemed to be bottomless, and moved his hand while pressing the tool against the skin.

On the reverse side of the skin, pieces of meat and fat were clinging.

What he was doing was scraping them off.

At first, Eiji was frightened by the smell of blood, as well as the damp, slimy feeling coming from the fat. His stomach felt the urge to vomit, sensing the smell of the animal.

He could clearly understand the reason why Tanya didn't want to assist him back when he was making the soap. In this case, however, the smell will stick to his nasal parts, which probably won't help in whispering his love.

After Eiji became used to the smell and the thrilling scenery, the smoke was kindled inside the room.

Using the smoke created from pine needles and straw, they carried the process of fumigation by hitting the pinned skins with it.

Eiji's and Tanya's house was similar, but there was no chimney in any of the households in this village.

This probably wouldn't cross their mind. The only one was installed in Eiji's workshop.

With no place to run away from the smoke, the air turned white in a blink of time and Eiji could feel his throat and eyes being done by it.

Jane, who was using a board to increase the fire, apologized.

– Please excuse us. Since it's only my husband and me, there's not enough manpower.

– I don't mind, but Jane-san, what's the deal with this smoke?

– We are tanning the skins using it.

– By hitting it with the smoke?

– Depending on the type of item, we apply different methods, but once the water is dried from it thanks to hitting it with smoke, the skin becomes tender. At the same time, we soak them inside grass pus and dye it using colors.

– What other methods do you have?

– We apply oil on it, knock the skin earnestly and stamp on it. Another method involves soaking it into a hot water mixed and boiled with the brains of the skinned animal, or many other methods.

– It's different to the methods which I know.

While murmuring the words with a sigh, Mike reacted sensitively.

– You, even know the methods of skin tanning?

– No, there's no way for me to know that in detail or its common ground.

– Whatever is fine. Just tell me.

As far as Eiji knew, there were methods of skin tanning used mainly in handgrips and scabbards for natas and small knives.

Because lots of them used skin made from cattle, the leather had a characteristic yellow-brown luster.

Since the time Eiji became a craftsman, he made sure that his small belongings, like wallet and bags were all made from real leather, instead of synthetic one. His evaluation of personal belongings

changed from the moment he had met another craftsman.

The more you cherish the item, the more you notice its charm, which is a nice feeling.

These he would get in his hands from time to time.

Because the wallet, which Eiji brought with, was the only existing one in this world, he showed it to Mike.

– Incredible! Hey Jane, take a look at this. That's incredible.

– What are you excited about? Oh my, such a detailed processing. It is nicely done, isn't it? I wonder just how much time and patience is needed to shave it this thinly.

– On top of that, this tenderness... It's a divine work. The leather material used for making this is cattle, right? Isn't this different from normal ones?

Mike and Jane observed the wallet with endless curiosity.

Had he known they would be interested this much, Eiji would have shown it much earlier.

Because he believed the two of them were hunters, he didn't think they would possess knowledge of a leather craftsman, and therefore, didn't introduce that topic.

That was his mistake.

– Then, how do you achieve this feeling of smooth touch and the refined charm?

– I only know that you have to soak the skin inside the liquid mixed with a compound called tannin.

– I wonder whether you're not hiding anything.

– I'm not.

– Well, if you intended to hide, then you wouldn't reveal the technique as well.

– First, even if someone like me, who has no specialist knowledge, were to hide for myself, I wouldn't be able to rival with you anyway.

– I think you've got a point.

If its tannin, the only things that come to mind would be a tea plant, persimmons, and wine.

What should one do, so to make it good? Eiji didn't know any

detailed method, but it seemed that Mike, who was mesmerized by the wallet, intended to explore for a method of tanning using the tannin compound.

The winter is fast approaching, just what should I do?! – said Mike. Eiji took a glimpse of Mike, who was in agony.

As soon as Jane told him to give up, a quarrel between the couple burst out, causing quite a bother for Eiji.

For him it was the nice experience of displaying a half-hearted knowledge while causing people a trouble.

Was it divine punishment?

Despite both of them vowing to have a child, Tanya suggested Eiji to sleep separately.

Unlike before when it concerned making soap, this time, he was half forceful while insisting to help remove the smell.

Hearing the incomprehensible words of his wife, Eiji felt as if he was about to cry in loneliness.

From that moment, Eiji decided to have the people, who were assisting Fernando, help him with removing the smell.

Notes

1. I've no clue how to translated dialects, but you can consider Bernard using an accent similar to country hicks.

Chapter 28 – The Preparations for the Festival of Abundant Harvest 1

A winter day is short.

Because it's the era where light is considered precious, it seems to be something that is only present from the morning to the evening.

Inevitably, the night comes early.

In exchange, the morning came earlier than dawn and people would wake up at the time when the sky was the darkest.

It was the morning.

The room, where the door was closed, was dim; nevertheless, there was a sign of the sun. The chicken was announcing the time of daybreak.

As Eiji stood up from the bed, his body trembled in the chilly atmosphere, making him dive into his bed one more time.

Aah, so warm. As expected, beds were the best. – he thought.

The bed, for which he longed for the whole time and which was finally completed, used the big and grown, old trees as its material. It was an enormous, almost king-sized bed.

Despite Tanya complaining about it leaving little space in the room, she enjoyed the bed as well.

By putting feathers inside the bed cover little by little, Eiji created a warm down-filled mattress. The amount of the raw cotton inside the sleeping mat was small, because of that, the stiffness in elasticity was its weakness, just like in hard bedding. Nevertheless, in comparison with the woven mat made from straw before, this one was exceptionally comfortable for sleeping.

When it was done, he wouldn't restrain himself in enjoying it.

Of course, there were times when he would sleep on it alone. On the other hand, Tanya, who usually had no problem with sleeping and waking up, became unable to get up in the early morning due to its warmth.

Even now, her calm sleep breathing was heard while embarking on

her trip to the world of dreams.

Being able to see the sleeping face of a woman, who would usually wake up earlier than Eiji and go to sleep late while not showing any weaknesses, was considered a precious time for him.

She was always tired.

Thanking her for all the troubles she had gone through, Eiji gently brushed Tanya's hair and moved his hand on her cheek.

While holding it with his fingers, he could feel the squishy feeling returning.

It's soft – he thought.

Her body was tender, wherever he looked.

Not only were Tanya's round pair of breasts and bottom feminine, but also her limbs.

However, there was no sign of them loosening up.

Inside her body, which was tempered under these hard conditions, there were actually signs of supple muscles.

The roundness and elasticity were the special traits of a woman, which coexisted in Tanya in beautiful proportions.

His hand caressed her body, starting from her nape through the collar bone and reaching her abundant breast.

It was of the size which didn't fit in his palm.

Even though the shape of her ribs below is understandable, its volume was still magnificent.

Despite her physique being different from foreigners, as expected, lots of women in this village have a fine degree of fleshiness.

Moving with his fingers, the shape of her breast kept changing endlessly together with him caressing it.

Her skin, which had a delicate texture, seemed to suck in his palm.

I wonder why it makes me feel this calm – Eiji wondered.

He wouldn't be content, no matter how many times he touched them.

Was it because he wasn't restraining? Tanya's eyelids began to twitch.

Should I pull back my hand as if nothing happened? Or rather, continue doing it boldly?

Thinking about that, her eyes opened while blinking with surprise.

– Nnn...Ah....

- Did you wake up?
- Good morning.... You're touching my chest again, aren't you?
- That's because they're charming.
- Ann...

Even though they were talking, his hand wouldn't stop.

The sweet voice coming from her mouth was heard.

However, it had no feeling of desire.

In the end, it was just her lips working.

Tanya's sight was still in daze.

Was it perhaps due to her low blood pressure?

- You really like breasts, just like a baby.
- I was raised without knowing my mother; therefore, I would crave for some maternity.
- Oh my, was it so?

After making an unexpected face, Tanya embraced him.

Eiji's sight was filled with big breasts.

While having his head hugged, she brushed it gently.

- Look, it's your mother.
- This feels embarrassing.
- Eiji-san, you sometimes behave like a child, don't you? You would desperately suck on breasts.
- I'm a man so.... Speaking of which, you don't seem to be mad.

Usually, Eiji would be scold whenever he tried to do something in the morning.

However, today Tanya's attitude was different, it was gentle.

While she was pleased, Eiji wondered whether he was expected to do something. Trying to read her hidden intentions, he couldn't settle down.

- It's because today is the day of the festival, isn't it? We are free from doing any labor, so it's special.
- Is that so? Well, then please spoil me a bit longer.
- Fufu. You're indeed a child.
- Today is special, a special day.

Eiji was fully spoiled.

- All right, let's prepare breakfast.
- A little bit more...
- It'll soon be the time for waking up.
- Got it. By the way, what are the plans for later?

Within a blink of time, Tanya stood up as she slipped away skillfully. If there's nothing to do, he would rather spend more time flirting. In front of Eiji, who was thinking so, Tanya smiled.

– For the festival to be enjoyable, adequate preparations are needed. Women will be in charge of arranging dances and cooking. On the other hand, men are supposed to set up the stage, is what I have heard.

– I plan to make the dishes which I remember from my hometown.

– So Eiji-san could do cooking as well, is it?

Why wouldn't you make some meals? – Such a sight was directed to him with Tanya having a wry smile.

While preparing meals, Eiji had no confidence in adjusting the fire.

No matter how many times he had to deal with fire in the workshop, it wasn't the same as using one's skills for working purposes.

For Tanya to nonchalantly prepare the meal each time, she was indeed a great wife.

– That's because it's a mannish type of cooking, so it's obvious it would be inferior to the delicious meals made by Tanya-san.

– I want you to eat delicious meals, since I put lots of love into them.

– And therefore I'm always thankful for being treated.

~.....

That's bad – Eiji felt his face turning red while feeling embarrassed.

Tanya too was hanging her head in shame. Was it because she too got embarrassed due to her own words?

Neither of them said anything. The silence, which made one want to writhe in agony, continued for a while.

Gohon – coughed Tanya. Feeling bashful, she went out the house.

– I-I will go scoop some water.

– Please go ahead.

Facing each other, both of them laughed while getting embarrassed.

With that, they began their preparations.

The preparation for the festival of abundant harvest was carried out by all the members of the village.

The festival itself was to be organized from the tribal chief's house to the west, before the expanding forest.

Because the vicinity of the forest consisted of bottomless swamps, entering it was normally prohibited.

Now in front of that place, preparations, such as mowing dry grass, building a campfire basket, as well as fire kindling were in progress.

Next to it, great amount of alcohol and fruits were gathered.

In the middle, there was an old platform, which was supposed to be a stage for as many as 10 people.

Is this the thing called the festival stage? – Eiji wondered.

Despite other constructions being made from wood, with the exception of the food storage house, this one was made using only stones.

Considering that it had served for such a long time, it was probably a very important facility.

– Eiji, this way!

Jane, who was controlling the situation, called in Eiji's direction after spotting him out.

As always, you would expect her to be in charge of women.

Several of them looked up to Jane's instructions and moved to their respective posts.

Jane herself was in the middle of baking bread.

What she kneaded was a white type of baguette, which was rarely eaten on a daily basis. What's more she was adding some honey.

It was a type of luxury reserved only for special occasions, such as wedding.

Just imagining the taste made Eiji drool without him knowing.

However skillful he is at cooking, as long as he doesn't have all the required materials, the tastiness will be limited as well.

Thinking about Tanya making this, it would be a natural reaction for him.

– So you came.

– That's quite the spirit there.

– Of course. It's a festival which is dedicated to the goddess of

abundant harvest, who blessed us for the whole year. Whatever festival it is, everyone would put in all their effort.

– I see. Indeed, the amount of crops would determine whether you starve or not, wouldn't it?

– And it's not only that.

– What do you mean?

– The goddess of abundant harvest is also the one that blesses us with children. It seems that Tanya is hoping for a child, so you better pray for it hard. Rather than that, you probably should do your best during nights.

Hahaha – while laughing excitingly, Jane didn't hold back while patting Eiji's shoulders, which made them feel painful.

Was she fecund? It seemed that she already had given birth to 7 children.

4 of them died due to illnesses before even growing up; nevertheless, the remaining 3 had been brought up healthily and were now helping out in their household.

Because he would hear the couple talking about wanting to have a brother or sister, their relationship seemed to be on good terms.

– I'm fine, but I've heard that Mike isn't doing well.

– Whaat? If he's out of stamina, then there's no use of him as a hunter. Well, if you say so, I'll make sure to feed him with something that brings back his spirit.

Because they are hunters, there should be lots of meat around them, more than anyone else in this village.

Probably, in addition to vegetables, such as garlic and onions, there were dishes which used internal organs, like livers, as their main ingredient.

Women from remote regions sure are strong.

Furthermore, it wasn't just limited to their pure physical strength.

Recalling the startling face of exhaustion Mike had whenever they met; Eiji felt the urge inside his heart of wanting to sympathize with him.

My condolences.

As long as he doesn't sustain a renal failure^[1], it should be fine.

– Well, just leave that husband's matter to me, I'll deal with it.

- I guess that would be the case.
- Besides that, what do you plan to make? Are you going to tell us a dish which has never been eaten here?
- I think you could say so. I think about making a food called Hamburger. If I'm not wrong, the method of making it was——
- Heh? Isn't that nice? Can we expect something from its taste?

What Eiji thought was how to make full use of the ingredients available in this village in order to make it delicious.

There was a limit in what you could use.

As for the livestock, there were cattle, pigs and chickens.

Nonetheless, they only had onions, carrots, garlic, and watercress, which could be used for making it.

There were no tomatoes or potatoes^[2], which were present in Italian cuisine.

Eiji's western culinary skills consisted mostly of Italian cuisine, but the problem was the tomato, which he often used in his cooking.

What's more, there was a problem with seasonings.

It would be fine to obtain them by simply frying the vegetables, but since he had no experience in making sauce, it would probably be hard to produce a convincing taste, even for him.

It was customary in this period to make sauce using vegetables and fruits, which were almost rotten.

Because taste has a secondary role, which is nutrition, one couldn't simply neglect it.

Eiji was determined about improving foods once there are enough of them.

He wanted to make sauces by any means, even if he had to squeeze rice grains to get sauces, such as soy and miso.

If it's a hamburger, then making use of some salt, as well as using herbs for aroma, will probably do for the taste.

There was one more overwhelming advantage of making a hamburger as it used minced meat, which could utilize the tendon that is usually thrown away.

- Those who are not occupied, gather!

After finishing his explanation, Jane quickly gave new orders to the other women.

Once they smashed(...) the cattle and pigs for today's festival, they proceeded to animal dismantling.

It looked like none of them were the type of women that would show cute reactions, such as screaming or averting their eyes.

On the contrary, it was Eiji that wanted to scream.

Seeing the animals' roundly opened eyes made him want to turn away his head.

Certainly, pet owners ought to feel it pain when thinking about their pets, in which they have put lots of feeling when raising, getting killed.

Nevertheless, nobody showed such emotions in this place.

Ah, as expected, the world he came to was much different from where he came from.

It was not the same as the world where the meat would be lined up and cleanly dried from blood.

This was the world where nobody would doubt if someone were to use brains for tanning process.

Indeed, women from long time ago were strong.

Naturally, it wasn't something that they wanted; rather it was because of the environment, which made them strong.

However, you could feel that this was a clear display of the difference in the strength of a human being.

Was Tanya this strong as well? – he wondered.

Perhaps, if they both were to have a matrimonial quarrel, it would be Eiji to lose. This made him a little bit anxious.

Notes

1. In traditional Chinese medicine, renal failure was believed to be the source of the body inactivity, including sexual drive.
2. Guess, I mentioned before at the beginning about them using potatoes, but I didn't precise them which was wrong from me. The type of potatoes in this text is an European/American type, whereas the one before, was probably Japanese type

Chapter 29 – The Preparations for the Festival of Abundant Harvest 2

Once it was past noon, most of the preparations seemed to be finished.

Explaining the right cooking procedure, Eiji decided to entrust that task to the women, who were skilled at it.

After that, he would help with carrying the food materials, drawing lots of water, supplying dried trees, and other jobs, which required him to use his feet.

The wind was chilly; however, while walking around and carrying the loads, Eiji wouldn't feel it.

There were no clouds in the sky; instead, it was fine weather, perfectly suited for hosting festivals. The sun was radiating above.

Even now, people who were bad at dealing with things would be working; nevertheless, the remaining ones that were men would be told to move towards the festival and wait at the open area.

Even throughout the year, there were only several days for resting.

What's more, being able to rest for a whole day was only possible in times like winter.

Most of the people gathered one by one while chatting with each other enjoyably.

Nothing but smiles were seen on their faces, and the place was filled with a cheerful atmosphere.

While looking around to check which group he should join, he discovered the same members as usual gathering around.

Was he noticed at the same time? Mike, who was sitting on the meadow, waved his hand while calling for Eiji.

– Hey Eiji, this way.

– Has everyone already done their job?

– Naturally. Otherwise, we would be shouted by my wife^[1] were we not quick with our job.

– She would say things like 'You still not finished with the job? You're slow!

– Yes yes. That’s mega scary.

The men in the vicinity laughed while watching Mike, who was shaking with fear.

There was everyone whom Eiji knew, including the hunter – Mike, the carpenter – Fernando, the lumberjack – Philip, and the farmers – Bernard and Giorgio.

Despite Eiji being acknowledged to a certain degree, he would still feel nervous when facing people whom he usually didn’t meet.

He felt glad to find the right people.

As he came next to Mike’s side, he sat down on the woven mat, which was specially prepared for this occasion.

Other men did the same and sat together in a form, which made a circle.

– You came just at the right moment -be.

– We were about to talk about some interesting stuff.

– You should join us too. Won’t you?

– Join?

Even though he felt relieved for a moment, Eiji became a little bit precautious after seeing smiles on men’s faces.

It was probably some worthless talk.

The core of the talk was about deciding who was the most beautiful woman in this village, not including one’s own wife.

Eiji thought it was a stupid thing to do; nevertheless, he couldn’t laugh. He could recall doing the same a long time ago. During his high school days it would be about which girl is the cutest, and during his university years – who was the Madonna.

It was the sort of talk which brought back memories. Since he started make his living as a blacksmith, such talks became unrelated to him.

That was something which the men would talk about together during this time, each year.

First, it was Bernard, who expressed his view.

– I think that the wife from Fernando’s household is the prettiest.

– Ah, that is certainly so.

– I a-agree.

Adelle, the wife of Fernando, was a refined and calm beauty, who didn't look to be born in the village.

Having an unusually kind behavior, she was refined in every movement.

Even toward Eiji, she was kind at their first meeting.

What he heard was that she had been taught and passed down this behavior from a long time ago in order to become the shrine maiden of a festival day like this one.

There was a meaning in what Bernard said. Indeed the word 'pretty' matched exactly this woman.

Receiving praises for his wife, Fernando felt bashful. He then chose his candidate.

– In terms of cuteness, I think that would be Philip's wife.

– Indeed, to think that she could get along with Philip, having such a small body.

– Right. You might think she would even break. Before, when she went to draw some water from the river, I had to help her; otherwise she would fall?

– And you would unintentionally want to protect her. What's more, that smiling face of hers is really admirable. I wonder if it's the reason for my choice. Remember, it's imprinted in her soul – 'the small justice.'

Philip's wife, Eve, was only around 140cm tall.

Being a full-fledged adult, she had given birth to 3 children; nevertheless, when she stands next to Philip, it looks more like they have a parent-child relationship.

Eiji recalled the first time he had heard about them being a couple while thinking that it was a crime.

Their relationship, which was similarly passionate to that of newlyweds, would usually give off a sweet atmosphere.

– S-she's really a type of a wife, whom I'm unworthy of.... But, besides my wife, if I were told to choose someone, it would be T-Tanya. I think she's the most charming, and recently, she has been looking truly happy.

– Aa, indeed. Because she's primarily a beauty, recently, once she began to eat more, she became much prettier.

– A long time ago, she was considered a real beauty. I guess that alone makes her cute. Back then, Most of the unmarried men would think about making her their bride. Well, in the end, she found someone who isn't related to this village.

Hearing how the past Tanya was talked about earnestly by Mike made Eiji think that he had wanted to meet her earlier.

Certainly, she made many different memories back then.

Of course, they will probably make many more of them from now on; however, it was a bit vexing.

– I, who have watched over Tanya, also think so. Eiji, you did a great job there.

– It's natural for Tanya-san to be that charming. Rather, it would be weird if anyone didn't think that way.

– You're just speaking fondly of her.

– My wife wasn't even once mentioned as the candidate. So impertinent.

As soon as Bernard and Giorgio raised their voices half seriously, Mike lifted his hands while trying to calm them down.

Feeling how much grief there was within Giorgio-san's shouts, Eiji wanted to console him without thinking. Of course, it would be the same as adding fuel to the fire, which wasn't hard to imagine.

In the first place, this was just an entertainment before the festival.

Nobody had the intention of heating the atmosphere and causing a dispute.

Nevertheless, it seemed that there was an element of a prank.

Just when Eiji thought that Mike was planning to do something naughty.

– Look here!

Suddenly standing up, Mike raised his single hand and shouted loudly.

It was a loud voice, which could grasp everyone's attention.

The men in the vicinity ceased talking and focused on Mike.

– It was the day of a certain night during the hot summer. One man held the ring in his hand saying 'Tanya-san. When you strike the iron, it becomes more resistant. I want to express and make sure of my love to you. Let both of us make a passionate love, just like the iron

burning crimson red’.

– Wha——?! Were you peeking on us?!

– The ring was inserted. ‘I love you, no matter what happens, and even if I were to remember about myself’.

– P-Please stop!

– I was told by granny Bona to make sure that everything between you two goes well. Try to be in my shoes and peek during a damn hot day with insects buzzing around. What’s more, to think that you would show such a flirtatious scene.

– Oh my, it’s nice to be young.

– That’s right. No wonder Tanya looks the most charming.

Stop it!

As his blood was exploding, Eiji couldn’t convert what he was thinking into words due to the embarrassment.

When everyone was mocking saying ‘Eiji, Eiji’, he could do nothing but do his best and stare at them while flapping with his mouth. Nevertheless, it was useless.

The guys that were all excited in pranking Eiji didn’t seem to stop.

Should I hit him and put a stop to this? – he thought unusually, which was a rather dangerous thing to do.

—— Nonetheless, it suddenly ended.

– Oh my, I don’t recall being asked with such ardent words during your proposal, Fernando-san?

– A-Adele?

– How about you start making people smile beginning with giving me a ring?!

– Jane!?

– Philip-san, I heard it. So you prefer Tanya-san over me?

– Eve! That’s a misunderstanding.

Probably someone from girls nearby heard their loud voice and went to report.

Once they noticed, the men’s wives surrounded them with full force. Even though their wives were smiling, they could feel a cold chill running down their spines. On contrary, the women’s eyes didn’t seem to smile at all.

Philip, who was unsophisticated, but dependable, was now panicking and wiping his sweat. That usually enormous body looked small now. He probably understood that there is no place for making excuses. His big physique was shrinking while his face became pale, desperately begging for forgiveness. Fernando was panicking and losing his composure, making his usual easygoing attitude look like a joke.

Eiji felt relieved that such a thing didn't happen to him. He thanked his luck from the deep inside his heart.

Were he to behave like a spoiled child in the morning and talk about other women's charm, just how angry would Tanya be?

Imagining that alone made it look scary.

While tracing the men bowing down and apologizing with his sidelong glance, Eiji stepped back, distancing himself from their company.

Tap – together with the sound, a gentle impact runs through his back.

– Who... Tanya-san?!

– Yes.

– Could it be that you saw it?

– No, I only heard it in detail and then you were seen.

– Is that so? But, please listen to me.

– Yes?

– Even if I'm being watched, there's no way for anything to change. The words, which I used to confess my love and my thoughts are both genuine.

Tanya-san was hanging down her head with a red face.

Today seemed to be full of moments where they both blushed.

However, because there were other people's eyes gathered, there was no way for him to remain silent.

– Aaah, that's some nice atmosphere there you're creating.

– U-unforgivable!

– Right, right. On the other hand, I am going to get punished!

– Yeah!

– Making fun of someone's lifetime's confession, you're the ones to be blamed. You reap what you sow.

‘Coward’, ‘traitor’ – such the words were uttered; nevertheless, one should not take it too seriously.

At any rate, once the festival begins, everyone will probably retain their lively mood.

Until then, Eiji should enjoy his time together with Tanya.

While thinking that way, Eiji bowed down towards the women, who were scolding them over a minor matter, and left the place hurriedly.

Behind his back, a huge scream reverberated.

– Speaking of which, Eiji-san, did you plan to choose your own candidate?

– No, since my life goes around the household and the workshop, I don’t know much about the majority of women in this village, you see.

– Is that so?

– That’s true.

– Are those your real thoughts?

In front of Tanya, who was poking her chin with her index finger, Eiji maintained his silent expression.

Nevertheless, he could feel an unpleasant sweat running through his back.

What he said wasn’t a lie, but neither the truth.

The tools, which he makes in the workshop, are mostly the ones ordered.

In order to forge an item, which suits its user the most, he had to learn about that person’s physique, the manner of use, and hear their wish.

— A tool, which was destined for that one and only person in the world.

Therefore, he would sometimes question about his customer’s living customs and personality, or similar things.

Fernando’s wife, Adele, requested for a thin kitchen knife, which would suit her gorgeous posture. Philip’s wife, Eve, wanted a large stock pot so as to make large portions for her husband’s meals.

It was not the sort of relationship in which their mutual feelings would be conveyed just by coming into contact; however, saying that he didn't know about those people would be false.

There was no doubt he would hold an impression about them, such as 'What a pretty person' or 'This person is truly cute.'

It wasn't something for which he felt guilty; nonetheless, if said, it would probably hurt the others' feelings.

– I believe you.

– Thank you.

Hearing that coming from Tanya, Eiji felt a sigh of relief while answering with a calm voice.

However much his eyes would be stolen for a moment by other women, it was nothing more than just being attracted by their charm. Living together and having a child is something he could only do with his wife.

And even the men, who are now being punished, are probably no different. – is what he thought.

Notes

1. Ace suggested it would be better to use the word 'wife' instead of 'mommy', like in case of Mike and Jane. The reason is because couples in other English speaking countries don't usually refer to themselves like this.

Chapter 30 – The Festival of Abundant Harvest

Once the sky was dyed red, people started to gather in the open space.

Eiji, who had been there for a long time, gazed at the whole thing from his seat, which he had taken from the very beginning, and gave off a sigh of relief.

So there were also people like this? – he thought.

The population of this village was around 250.

The open space, in which everyone could sit as they wished, was filled with people.

Eiji remembered having once seen a similar scenery.

That was back in his student years during the school assembly. He could recall the long advisory instructions given by the principal during the speech, which Eiji had considered as reproachful. Usually, it would take place during summer or winter season.

This place is full of people unknown to me – he thought.

If they were people who lived in the center of the village, Eiji would greet them from time to time. However, it was rare for him to face someone that lived in the outskirts.

There were individuals whom he wouldn't see in his daily life, such as infants, children at the age of elementary school and elderly people with bent lower backs using canes.

– You're Eiji-san, ain't you?

– Yes I am. Nice to meet you.

– Yes, sorry for the late introduction. I'm looking forward to enjoying today.

The elderly man bowed down to Eiji with a smiling face.

They hadn't met before; nevertheless, Eiji, who wasn't a familiar face in this village, stood out, which was clear to the villagers.

What's more, many of them knew about him becoming the executive, and about his name and achievement as well.

As he was encountered by everyone, they would exchange a greeting or speak to him a bit sometimes, then move to their respective places.

The faces of the people that gathered were filled with warm smiles. Seeing that, Eiji could definitely understand how enjoyable this event must be for them.

Indeed, it was the sort of enjoyment that was only for one time a year, as there was usually no place for having a good time with any entertainment.

Had they eased up on their field work, it would have backfired on them with lesser amount of crops. No matter how much you don't feel like working, you couldn't ease up on your job.

And it isn't just limited to field work.

In every job, which covers manual labor, you have to do everything by yourself.

Because of that, if it weren't for works based on the system of specific occupation, the effectiveness would decline.

Festivals and holidays, which took place several times a year, were probably considered special, as it was only the only time one could rest from the heavy labor.

During a small break, perhaps I should tell them how to play Othello as a form of amusement. – thought Eiji.

—— The fact that it would later become the reason for turmoil didn't cross Eiji's mind now.

Before the inauguration of the festival, the alcohol was distributed.

It was beer.

Was it intended for warming up one's body? It looked like the beer was heated.

Once he received the beer, he would pass it to other people.

The wooden cup, which was hollowed out, contained the mildly warm beer.

What he savored inside his mouth wasn't just the fragrance of wheat, but also herbs, which were used together. The taste was refreshing, making it easier for him to drink. Eiji could feel how his body was warming up from deep inside.

After he drank for a while, the warmth inside his stomach spread thorough his body.

It's said that people from snow countries can hold their alcohol. Perhaps, the cold is the reason why they can endure drinking this.

- The festival will soon begin.
- Is it going to be your turn now, Adele-san?

Looking next to him, there was Adele dressed unusually beautiful. Was it intended for divine work? They were probably high grade clothes, even for this village, and perhaps mended more times than the tribal chief's clothes.

Her clothes were made from a smooth fabric, which had no hatchings standing out.

It was bleached pure white; however the clothes were dyed red now due to evening sun.

She wore make-up on her face and was more attractive than her usual look.

Adel nodded at Eiji's words.

- It's the first time for Eiji-san, isn't it? We make offerings to the goddess of abundant harvest by performing on the stage.
- I've heard that your offerings consist of cattle, but...
- Apart from the cattle, which can no longer be of use, we use bracelets and farming tools, such as hoes.

The bracelets and hoes would eventually be thrown and gulped down into swamp as offerings.

Eiji felt that it was a little bit of a waste to abandon hoes from the material point of view; however, because he grew up in a household which used to call a Shinto priest whenever there was a festival of bellows, he could understand this feeling.

As well as this conduct, which was followed by responsibility.

- Acting as a representative of this village, that's surely a big role.
- It is something which has been decided since I was small. What's more, this task is not something to be done by everyone, so it's an honor for me.
- Indeed, this is a job suitable for Adele-san, who apart from being pretty, has a calm behavior.
- Ara, I feel flattered. Did you know? Both me and Tanya are often compared when it comes to decide who's the most beautiful in this

village?

– And y-your point is?

– Eiji-san, do you intend to tell Tanya that you want to hold flowers in both hands?^[1]

– W-wait a moment!?

– It's a joke.

Good grief, the people who make jokes are too mischievous.

I wonder what Tanya would do, were she to become serious. – he thought.

Speaking of which, she was probably serious about that. I really want her to stop that – thought Eiji.

Adele smiled while apologizing to Eiji, who had a stern expression. Even that one aspect of her behavior made her a different flower from Tanya.

– The ceremony itself will soon end. After that there will be dancing, singing, and cooking. It will become noisy, but please enjoy your first festival, even if you have to bear with it.

Adele, who said it with an expression full of confidence, bowed down as she left.

As Eiji was staring at her silhouette in daze, the sign of someone approaching could be sensed.

He turned back and became startled.

It was Fernando, who had his face red from alcohol, staring at him.

– Ain't you oggling at my wifeee?

– That's wrong! Speaking of which, despite saying you were punished, ain't you quite attached to her?

– O, oh.....Don't make me remember unpleasant things. My lower legs throb whenever I think about it.

Trying to subdue his anger, he became pale while holding his left.

Because it was under the dim shadow, he couldn't tell, but Fernando's legs were probably swollen.

You would think he was completely dominated by his wife.

Eiji didn't want to imagine just how much had Fernando gone through.

It seemed that behind that kind behavior of hers, there was a severe

attitude, similar to her husband.

- But if you drink alcohol, won't your legs throb even more?
- Besides days like this, I've no opportunity to drink this much.
- If you suffer, then I guess that would of little importance.
- As if I'd know unless I tried.
- Looks like I'm just meddling into somebody else's problem.
- The me of tomorrow will be different from me of today, you see. It's fine to suffer the consequences of tomorrow, tomorrow, or have tomorrow's fun tomorrow.
- And then, the thing remaining tomorrow will be the pain.

Though it would probably end quickly.

Glug glug – As Fernando was sipping his mug of beer, he left the place to ask for more.

Eiji, who was once more alone, again looked around in search for the silhouette of his wife.

Could it be that she was still in charge of cooking? – he thought.

It felt a little lonesome for Eiji to be waiting alone for the inauguration.

Finally, once the sky changed its color from red to deep blue, and the curtain of night fell on the place, the bonfire was kindled.

The sound of the tree bark bursting was heard together with its scattering spark.

The top of the stage platform was brightly lit up inside the darkness of dusk.

The noisy atmosphere froze in silence for a moment.

It seemed as though the bugs and wild animals hid their breathing sounds.

The sound of a khakkhara echoed, and then the sound of a drum.

Tinkle – with a single ring of bells, the silhouette of women surfaced from the darkness.

Adele, who was holding a staff in one hand, walked onto the stage from the side of the open space near to it.

Each time she made a step, a clean sound reverberated. Behind Adele, there were other women following.

The tribal chief – Bona, the manager of women – Jane, and Tanya, all of them were holding offerings.

There should be no particular meaning in doing that.
After that, Mike and Philip appeared, pulling a large cow.
The offerings were lined up on the stage.
The silence continued.

Even the men, who looked as though they were totally drunk, wouldn't utter anything frivolous.

Everyone was keeping their mouth closed, expecting for the moment of holiness.

The festival was also the worshiping and making dedication to deities.

People were earnestly believing in a god.

– Thou who are the goddess of abundant harvest in this land. We give thanks to thee for thy blessing and the beneficial rain, which you have brought to us for this whole year. We pray for thee to extend thy affection for the upcoming spring crops as thee would always do while we make this dedication for thee.

Adele kneeled down while bowing. All the representatives, who were sitting behind her, bowed in the same manner.

The flame from the bonfire bursted loudly for a moment.

The iron pole was swung down cutting through the air.

The cow, which was hit by it, had its eyes turn white after giving out a single scream, at the same time passing away within a moment.

The cattle was laid down on its side, and processed quickly and accurately.

It was a splendid performance and quick work, which would make one surprised.

Finally, the liver and heart, in which the soul of the cow was residing, were taken out and served as the offerings on the plates.

Notes

1. this comes from a Japanese proverb 'flowers in both hands', meaning that a man have both of women for himself. Adele is implying that Eiji wants to hog both her and his wife for himself since he flattered her.

Chapter 31 – The Song of Migrants

The remaining beef would be wholly roasted according to the customs.

Unlike boars and pigs, it was much more troublesome for beef to roast completely.

Among the men, those who were confident with their own physical strength skewered the beef using stakes, hung it up, and began to roast it directly on the fire.

It was a large cattle.

Despite cutting off the roasted outside part of the beef, it will probably take lots of time until the fire fully cooks it.

Once the offering to the goddess was made, people proceeded with its consumption responsibly.

At that time, one would notice how spirituality and reality combined with each other in a reasonable way.

Before the beef would be done, villagers were served beforehand with hamburgers containing minced beef and pork.

Shouts of joy were heard from the direction of those who were served.

– This is delicious!

– So t-tender! This is the first time for me to taste a tender meat like this.

– This smell and taste comes from beef and pork, you see. What's more the ratio of both kinds of meat is 7 to 3. By severing muscle fibers, the stiffness of the beef would reduce, and by using it with the ground bread powder, it would give a fluffy feeling. Also, mixing in the pork will allow you to draw out the taste coming from the fat. As for the beef smell, you deal with it using milk, eggs, and all sorts of herbs. Then you put a thick slice of cheese to add to the taste and combine it together with pickles. Summing up all this balance of taste... you will receive this deliciousness.

Having part of the people filled with wild enthusiasm, the hamburger was favorably received.

Eiji didn't consider it would be denied; nevertheless, seeing in practice how glad the people became made him sigh with relief.

There were also opinions praising a tougher meat for having more consistency that made it taste better.

Besides that, it is also said that there is the advantage of thoroughly biting while eating the food, as it made the stomach easier to become content.

Everyone's jaws were robust.

Even the baked bread had a much different consistency.

In comparison with Eiji, everyone's jaws were much stronger.

The reason for such an opinion is because the people who had hamburgers would switch to the roasted meat from the offering without any dissatisfaction.

Eiji was pleased seeing elderly, who had particularly weak teeth, enjoy the hamburger.

– In other words, does it mean that the strength of my jaw is comparable with those of elderly in this village...?

Eiji had the feeling of suddenly becoming old.

Has the atmosphere of the festival reached me? – he wondered.

Eiji, who drank the served alcohol and ate the distributed bread with honey, didn't deny that.

He was aware that within this half of a year he had been tasting the most luxurious foods and becoming tipsy as for this village's standard.

However, it was enjoyable.

Kindling the fire, which wasn't inferior to the chill of the night, and drinking alcohol under the starry sky – this made his heart open.

Next to him, Tanya, who finished her work, joined him in eating rather belatedly.

Her face was blushing from alcohol.

– It's rare for Tanya to be drinking alcohol, isn't it?

- Do you dislike women that drink...?
- No, I just thought it was strange, since you don't usually drink.
- That's a relief, because it's quite embarrassing once I get drunk.
- While we are at it, now ain't you...
- Feeling a little bit drunk?
- By the way, what with that alcohol bottle behind you?
- It's inside my stomach?

Why did it take form of a question?

Her pupils that usually looked intellectual, were now damp.

Her expression became soft and her movements turned completely sluggish.

The way how she deeply breathed while touching her lips with her hand was amorous, to the extent of becoming fascinated with her.

Was it tiresome for her to sit straightly? Tanya leant against Eiji.

Feeling her shoulder, he could tell her body temperature was warm.

It was probably due to the whole place being warm and the heated atmosphere generated by the people.

Once Tanya put the hamburger into her mouth, her face became filled with surprise.

Ara, it's delicious – murmuring that, she turned silent for a moment.

Her eyes, which looked at Eiji, became serious without showing any sign of being drunk.

–...This, it's the dish suggested by Eiji, isn't it?

– That's hamburger, you see. But it wasn't me who invented that.

– I didn't know you could make such a delicious meal.

– No, that's why, it wasn't...

– However, by telling other people, it's proof you can make it as well?

– That is, well...

I give up – he thought.

Eiji scratched his head while trying to hide his confusion.

It seemed that the talk would eventually lead to making it.

It wasn't something he couldn't make as long as he tried, but, it would mean extending Eiji's duty with domestic chores, despite him already being in charge of his works.

If possible, I want to entrust Tanya with the housework – thought Eiji.

– I have a request but...

– What?

– I want Eiji-san to tell me about the dishes you know.

– Even If I'm told so, it's not like I know in detail.

Despite feeling relief because he won't have to cook, there was yet another problem, which caused him a headache.

There was no white rice, no miso, nor any soy. Also, there were no tomatoes, which meant that preparing Italian cuisine is out of question.

Just how many things can I cook? – he wondered.

Because he didn't know how it would work in practice, he had no confidence.

– Even if it's just a bit, I want to reproduce the taste which Eiji-san used to savor. You won't complain about my cooking whenever you eat, but wouldn't it be better to match it with your preferences?

Indeed, he eats every day.

Rather than thinking it was natural for there to be this few dishes due to this period's limited techniques, even if it was a just little, matching the taste to one's palate would add more colors to their life from now on.

Toward Eiji, who was calmly considering, Tanya had an expression filled with suspense while waiting.

– Well, because I will tell you the methods of making, I'll entrust you with cooking.

– T-thank you.

– But, considering the number of food materials we have now, it will be harsh.

– However much time it takes, I will master it someday. That's why, please wait patiently.

Eiji was happy about that gentle side of his wife, who wished for him to have a delicious meal, even if it was just a little bit better.

Considering the materials they had in stock, it would probably be western cuisine.

As expected, Eiji wanted to build a cattle barn as well and arrange the right environment for increasing the livestock population.

- But, let's do it starting from tomorrow.
- That's because we are going to eat and drink properly today, isn't it?
- As for drinking, we should be rather moderate.
- Yes.

Seeing her exceptional smiling face, which she didn't try to hide, Eiji felt attracted without realizing it.

In front of the open space, around 10 people gathered. Other villagers, who were facing them, welcomed the group with claps and whistles.

I wonder what will be showcased – thought Eiji.

Tanya leant her wine cup while pointing out.

- Ah, they're about to sing.
- The one who is going to sing... that's Jane, right?
- Jane-san is extremely skillful in singing.
- That's because her voice usually comes from her core, isn't it? I'm always surprised whenever she calls me.

Was it due to her physical appearance that she could perhaps generate a voice similar to an opera singer?

While holding a rude impression about her physical build, Eiji waited for the song to begin.

There were 5 people holding musical instruments and 5 others standing in front to sing, with Jane standing the closest.

Finally, the prelude began.

End-blown flutes, drums, and instruments similar to guitars started to play a melody.

It was a song of migrants. A song of those leaving their familiar homeland, separating from parents and friends, and departing to new lands.

A song of those passing through mountains, forests, and waters, in order to seek out a suitable living place.

A song which told about falling into illness, about dropping out due to injuries, but also about not throwing away one's hope.

I wonder why.

I wonder, why does it feel this sorrowful?

Once he noticed, the feeling of loneliness gushed out from inside his chest. He couldn't suppress this feeling.

Without giving out a voice, Eiji——— cried silently.

Not trying to sob, he hid his breathing.

Alone———so as not to be noticed, nor kill the atmosphere of the festival.

It seemed that nobody in this village could understand the meaning behind this song.

Being different from their ancestors who had to leave their homeland, they were born in this village and grew.

It was painful.

That's because Eiji was alone, being left out.

And at the same time, it was pleasant.

No one had to bear the same sorrow.

I wonder how father is doing – Eiji thought.

He wondered how people there would judge him in this case.

Would they consider him dead? Missing?

He didn't have many people meeting him and showing courtesy, still, there was someone like that.

I wonder if his condition will worsen due to him worrying.

Eiji could easily imagine his father getting depressed.

He was the sort of person who wouldn't be able to make most dishes by himself.

Won't he lose the weight?

Will he be able to continue smithing?

Inside Eiji's head there were different people, including his friends from his place and people that took care of him, but most of all, he

was concerned about his father.

If they can't find his whereabouts, it will be the same as an eternal parting and considering him as dead.

I want to meet him.

I want to meet him.

A single word was fine, Eiji wanted to tell him about his safety. He truly wished for that.

He wanted to tell his father how he avoided one problem after another that caused him lots of trouble, about him wedding a wife, and also about him polishing his skills as a blacksmith every day.

The song continued.

His view was obstructed with tears; nevertheless, the song would reach his ears.

Suddenly, his head was embraced.

Once he noticed, he was laid down on a lap.

A gentle warmth was transmitted to him.

What came into his view was the sky full of stars and his wife's smiling face.

– Do you feel lonely?

– Yes...

– I can't make it possible for Eiji to meet the people you want, but...

As soon her words halted, his head was stroked.

– I'm here for you. I won't go anywhere, so rest assured.

– This situation, it feels like the opposite from before, isn't it?

– I'm serious. However lonely you are, crying is forbidden.

– Sorry, but let me remain like this for a while.

Tanya's voice too, was in tears.

There was a person that would shed tears and feel the pain just like him.

For that, Eiji was grateful.

The loneliness, that scared him and made his heart empty, reduced in size little by little. He could feel that.

Numerous stars expanded on the sky.

Is one of them the Earth? – he wondered.

Or perhaps, this is the same planet, but a different period?

He knew that he couldn't tell his father, nevertheless...

Father, I'm doing fine, so please, also be fi—

Once he noticed, the song ended with the surroundings being wrapped by thunder-like applause.

Chapter 32 – The Resumption of Smithing

Ah, so cold, so cold.

Once Eiji looked up at the sky, it was covered with gray.

Not letting a single ray of light go through, the gray sky was blended with white things that fluttered. These were the falling snow.

Staring at the sky from the entrance, Eiji felt reluctant about whether or not he should go. Tanya put an outer garment on him.

It was a fur coat that she had previously made.

The coat, which was furnished with the skin of a fox, provided him with a fluffy touch and a certain warmth.

- Today's much colder than usual, isn't it?
- Please take care so that the workshop doesn't turn chilly.
- That's fine, because I always burn fire.
- That's right.
- Tanya-san, you too, please properly kindle the fire so as not to get frozen.
- I'll be fine. Didn't you make this hand warmer for me? So it will properly warm me up.

The basic material for the hand warmer was iron powder.

Eiji made it by putting the iron scraps from his work into a cotton bag.

- Well, I'm off.
- Despite doing the parting kiss everyday... I'm still not used, you see. It's embarrassing.
- Your embarrassed face, it's refreshing to look at it once again.
- Eiji-san...
- Thank you for the treat.

Giving out a miserable voice, Tanya kissed him timidly with an expression that was red just like a heated piece of iron.

The path leading to his workshop, which was not used by many

people, was slightly covered up by the snow.

Despite hearing the delightful sound of crunching each time he stepped on the snow, somehow, Eiji's heart didn't feel moved. Was it perhaps due to him becoming an adult without the heart of a child?

On his way from home to the workshop, Eiji frequently rubbed his hands together while warming them up with his breath.

The blowing wind was chilly; nevertheless, his heart was warm.

Two week had passed since the festival of abundant harvest—Regarding what happened after the festival, Eiji didn't want to remember. Simply, it was truly bothersome for him.

Considering his homeland, where he had been, today would be one of the most special days in his workshop.

Once he reached the workplace and opened the wooden door, Eiji clapped his hands in prayer, which was unusual for him, and entered inside.

The arrival of winter is different depending on each year; nevertheless, it is around 20th day of the twelve month.

It felt as though today was be the first day of the new year for him to resume smithing, after two weeks of absence.

Because this day was an important one for him, he wouldn't fret about wasting firewood and charcoal for this particular day.

Without restraining Eiji kindled the fire.

He swept the floor called tataki^[1], which he would tread upon.

There were different things lying in thick masses on the floor inside the workshop, among which were: ashes, iron sands, iron oxide that is generated during striking, and minuscule amounts of slag. Once all of this mixed together, the soil created a black gloss little by little.

Back when Eiji was still in Japan, farmers would usually come to his household and request this soil.

A soil that included various materials would contain a small quantity of nutrient, and therefore was considered favorable for growing foodstuff.

He would laugh at how his father thought of such an unexpected thing as a priceless treasure.

Since Eiji was now using this in the backyard of his household, he still didn't know what result it will yield in their life.

Once he slowed down his sweeping, the presence of another person was felt.

The person's shadow, which was one size smaller than his, was that of his disciple, Pietro.

- Good morning!
- Oh, good morning.
- I apologize for making you do the preparations.
- It's good practice, so that's fine. Rather than that, guess I told you before, but you ought to pay respect properly.
- Yes!

Eiji intended to tell Pietro about the customs that are present in a workshop as well.

Despite there being cultural differences from where he had lived, Eiji thought he should tell Pietro about spiritual aspects of smithing since he was already teaching him the skills.

It wasn't an emphasis on spiritualism; however, proverbs and way of thinking were also parts of the skills, to which one should live accordingly.

Eiji also took his lessons from these unusual things when he was a disciple; nevertheless, it was mainly thanks to him daily polishing his skills that he became a full-fledged blacksmith.

Then again, thanks to him being told about that every day, Eiji gained a new awareness.

- Erm...
- Hm? What's the matter?
- When you pay respect, what god should you pray to?
- Ah... that's right.

So I've to explain to this point? – he wondered.

There are several gods in whom blacksmiths believe.

However, apart from gods, like the god of the cooking stove, Kanayago god, and Inari^[2] god that were worshiped depending on the region, there were people, who would just visit a local shrine.

Everyone in Eiji's family worshipped Kanayago god.

The god that is also known by other name – kanayamabikoamenomahitotsunomikoto^[3] – is considered to be the one who governs the pair of bellows, which is the cornerstone

among all the blacksmith's tools.

The main temple of the god is located in the Shimane prefecture. According to the legend, once the god stopped in front of the treetop of a big Japanese Judas tree, he noticed a pair of bellows stuck in between.

At the time of the special event named the Festival of Bellows, the god would be worshiped by Shinto priests.

– Listen. It's hard to explain, but hear me carefully.

– Yes.

– The name of our workshop's god is kanayamabikoamenomahitotsunomikoto.

– Kanayamabiko, amenoma....hitotsu, mikoto.

– That's right. If you have no god whom you worship, then please pray to this god so that we can produce things skillfully, and so that there's no fire incident.

– Master, it feels as though I will bite my tongue.

– Try to say it quickly.

– kanayamabikoame—!! ...awwwie. Master, can you say it?

– Alright, then let's pray silently.

– That's mean! Master too, please say it!

Because the workplace is where fire is usually dealt with, there tends to be lots of fire incidents.

No matter how much attention one would pay to extinguishing a fire, the sparks would scatter whimsically on their own.

Therefore, you would request a god to protect you from the fire.

Looking at the earnestly praying Pietro, Eiji waited for him to finish while feeling glad as his mentor.

– I'm done.

– Righto. Then let's begin striking.

– Yes!

– First, insert the charcoal like usual.

Pietro divided the charcoal in small portions.

Using a Nata singlehandedly, he divided the charcoal and created 2 cm small chips.

If possible, charcoal made from pine trees and chestnuts were good as well.

Thanks to that, using a pair of bellows to regulate the temperature will become easier, and it will be simple to heat up deliberately using a low temperature.

In the first place, there were charcoal chips in stock; however, accumulating a regular amount of them was a good practice.

What's more, this was a good training for hammer swinging.

Actions such as accurately swinging down to where you were aiming and understanding where to hit were also useful for hammer swinging.

Being praised by his father, who would rarely do so, for having a good brain made Eiji a little bit proud.

Judging from the situation, Pietro wasn't bad; nevertheless, he wasn't particularly fast.

- Master, I'm done preparing the charcoal.
- Alright, next light the fire.
- Yes!
- Ah, wait a moment.
- Yes?
- Don't use the flints like you would usually.
- Eh? Then how am I going to light the fire?

Eiji halted Pietro, who was about to prepare fire by using flints.

Despite using the same method of preparing fire, this day was different.

Hearing that he shouldn't use the flints, Pietro made a curious expression.

- We are going to strike the iron.
- Y, yes. We always strike a heated iron.
- That's not what I mean; we are going to strike this iron as it is.

Eiji held a slender iron pole.

Once Eiji explained to him to put it on the anvil and strike, Pietro made a more and more curious face.

Well, even if I tell him, it will be hard for him to understand. – he thought.

Was Eiji too frank with his explanation? Pietro made a flustered face, which was rare for him. He looked a little bit afraid.

If he was an obstinate type of master, Eiji would probably have

raised his hand against the disciple; however, he wasn't keen on resorting to Spartan education.

If he were to choose whether to do so or not, he might have given Pietro a toffy or a candy stick as well.

– Iron has a mysterious property.

– Yes

– Whenever you strike the iron, its property will become balanced and it will seemingly hold a magnetic force. Another way for the iron itself to hold the heat is by adding external force, such as striking and bending.

When one folds and twist a wire, it will become naturally hot to the extent of becoming unable to hold it.

The same phenomenon will be created when striking with a hammer. Starting a fire by generating heat is a customary way in a blacksmith's workshop since the ancient times.

– Well, it's not like you will understand from just listening. So as for you to see it...

– Yes.

Eiji began to strike the iron pole on the anvil.

The heat began to transfer through his hand that was holding it.

The place which he was holding directly was probably turning very hot.

Once he mixed together dried straw ashes, smoke eventually rose and the fire was kindled.

– It's real!

– Still doubting in what I said?

– No, I believed in Master. There's no way Master would lie.

– Hey, enlarge the fire using these straw ashes.

Hehehe – Pietro laughed, causing Eiji to be taken aback while thinking that he indeed is an optimistic guy.

Because the atmosphere was really cheerful, he couldn't bring himself to scold him.

This guy has a peculiar personality, indeed – thought Eiji.

Pietro was rather a rare type of worker.

The fire transferred from the straw ashes to the tree bark, and

eventually grew bigger on the charcoal.

Once the watermill started to make the pair of bellows works, the charcoal inside the furnace burned red.

Notes

1. Japanese type of entryway, also known as Genkan. More info: [Wikipedia](#)
2. Japanese shinto god: [Wikipedia](#)
3. or kanayamabiko amenomahitotsu no mikoto, which is lit. Kanayamabiko The one-eyed lord of the heaven(needs to be confirmed though). For more info about Kanayamibiko: <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=89>

Chapter 33 – The Five Miniatures

When it comes to the beginning of the striking, one has to strike, otherwise it won't start.

As soon as Eiji confirmed there was enough fire passing through the charcoal, he threw the prepared iron metal inside the furnace.

These were the so-called soft iron and ferrite, which were low in carbon.

- Master, what do you plan to make today?
- It has been decided what we will be making at today – sword^[1], saw, scythe, nata, and hoe. We will make miniatures of all five of them using the soft iron.
- These won't become useful.
- That's right, you can't use them.
- Isn't it a waste?
- Perhaps it is, but it's not like there's no meaning in doing so.

Eiji looked at the iron-made chair left at the entrance of the workshop.

It was placed there for the clients to use. Eiji was proud of it being a high grade product, the function of which was to let the clients sit and not to let them come inside.

The iron chair, which frequently use to be folded, was furnished with leather after it was completed.

Having a look from modern times, it was a gem which possessed both look and function.

- Once they're done, we will use them in front of the gate as decorations. Both the chair and miniatures will fulfill their role of advertising our skills.
- I see.
- No matter how good the article you make is, as long you don't show how its done, there will be many people who won't understand how good the products are.... What's more, all miniatures have nothing but a deep connection with a workshop. I wonder if you could compare their relationship with an indispensable ritual.

– So the first thing you make each year when resuming the works are these?

– Yeah. At the beginning we put them in front of the gate, after that, we line them up next to it. With each year your craftsmanship will change, making the clients understand the extent of your skills. That alone makes it worth it, for it becomes the material of evaluation.

Naturally, since they were presently the only ones capable of handling iron; the miniatures won't have any bigger role than telling how good the articles are.

The reason of Eiji making the miniatures was due to the importance of preserving and cherishing the pure customs handed down by his ancestors.

Eiji, who studied the modern knowledge more than anyone else, treasured the teaching from his ancestors, as it was the remnant left by humanity, without which, it would have been impossible for them to reach the current level of technology.

– Well, shall we make them?

– It will be my very first hammer swinging this year.

– Because you haven't done it for a long time, I won't acknowledge you unless your performance is good.

– Eh? I'll do my best.

– What? It's neither forge welding nor blade grinding. What's more, it isn't hard, so it won't take long.

Eiji draws the cord, which was hanging down from the cellar.

The sounds of streaming water, creaking wood, and the cog-wheel were filling the inside of the workshop completely.

The waterwheel rotated and the cog-wheel moved, sending wind to the pair of bellows.

The charcoal, which was cut up, started to burn red.

– Just like always, carefully observe the temperature of the iron.

– Yes! I like this moment when the wind is delivered, making the fire burn faintly red.

– I too, like it. Perhaps, looking at the flames puts every blacksmith's heart at peace, is what I think.

– Looking at the flames is the secret behind a blacksmith's skills, isn't it?

- There's a secret in making good articles. Today is a good chance for that, so I'll tell you.
- What is it? I'm hugely curious about that.
- If you are not making it, you won't realize how it looks.
- It won't do if I am not making?

Pietro probably wanted to polish his skills, even if it was to make him faster by a single day.

His face, which was awaiting Eiji's next words while having the eyes radiating with glitters, completely changed into the one with doubts. While deeply observing the change in temperature of the iron, he thought of some words.

He wondered how he could express this peculiar feeling of his, so as to convey in the best way.

- Because stretching iron is tiresome, I can tell Master that once the iron is heated, the number of carbon will fall out together with its stiffness, won't it?
- Yes. Once the sparks scatter, it will be the proof of the carbon falling out. You did a good job.
- Ehehe, thank you-su.
- If you make it stiff by applying low temperature, no matter how much time passes, it won't stretch and you will only have a sore back and shoulders at the end. There's a kind of temperature that is suitable for iron. A temperature that is de-si-red by i-ron.
- A temperature desired by iron...
- Once you obtain that, you will be able to make fine things with ease. The difficulty lies in the difference of the temperature, which is based on the amount of carbon. If the iron becomes red colored like the evening, it is too low. On the other hand, if it turns yellow like a lemon, it is too high. The best is the one with the mandarin orange color. It seems to be the right moment.

The iron material was heated while faintly radiating with light that could be said to be orange colored, similar to the mandarin orange.

Thanks to the dimness of the day accompanied by falling snow inside the workshop, it was easy to watch the color of the iron.

Pietro took out the highly heated iron material with a pair of tongs and moved it onto the anvil.

Then he struck it using a small hammer.

The small hammer held by its master looked just like a conductor's stick swung in a musical performance.

Press, pull, strike quickly and powerfully, be more delicate and prudent at this place – Eiji gave signals to his disciple to take the first move instead of using words.

The sound generated by continuously striking the iron was distracting; therefore, he didn't depend on using words, which would slow Pietro down.

Striking the iron as if stretching it perpendicularly, Pietro swung the hammer toward its direction.

If Eiji deemed there was not enough hitting, he would give a sign to Pietro to strike.

Eiji was in charge of instructing, whereas, Pietro would swing sincerely.

The rhythm was light and nice.

The sound produced by the iron was sometimes high and sometimes low, as if playing a single musical composition.

Once the iron cooled down, the work would stop, and then the wind would be delivered inside the furnace.

Only during that moment he could take a breath. The smithing would repeat that way.

– The hammer works the same way. You're still not able to make fine things when striking it with your arm. Feeling the hammer becoming an extension of your arm, understanding the sensation of iron directly, and then, not controlling your hand but your hammer with ease.... These are essential points if you want to grasp the feeling.

– For that to happen, what should I do?

– You should practice by making lots of them and think about iron like a common thing.

– So it's mainly giving my best, isn't it?

– Well, that's regrettable, but it's a little bit different.

– That is...

– The color has changed. Ok, let's resume our work.

Having his words interrupted, Pietro once again put the iron material

on the anvil.

Managing the temperature of the iron is most essential.

More than talking, more than anything, the only thing he could do was to strike the iron with its desirable temperature.

Saying that, smithing is an occupying work.

The work doesn't go according to one's own convenience, but rather that of the iron.

The iron was stretched. Despite it being loose, it took the shape of a sword.

In the end it was a miniature, so its completion took unusually less time in comparison with making a full-sized one.

Again storing the iron inside the furnace.

Pietro spoke once more as if waiting for that moment to finish.

– Besides doing one's best, what else should I do?

– You should properly consider the meaning behind each and every hammer swing. Have you ever thought about why you ought to swing it the way you were instructed?

– No...

– Haven't you felt the recoil coming back to your hammer whenever the temperature slightly cools down?

– Not yet.

– Well, guess that would be obvious. I too, was like that.

A long time ago, Eiji also received his teaching in the same manner.

Had he been able to grasp that with his own thinking from the very beginning, he would have been called a genius.

– It's fine if you try to feel that the next time. The change in the sound generated by the iron, the change of the recoil, and the hardness that appears at the time of sharpening, all of them have meaning. Everything will change depending on how aware you are of these factors, as well as how you deal with them.

– Understood. I'll make it.

A person that doesn't get angry from being pointed out their own imperfectness will grow into an adult.

I wonder, how I was back then? – while thinking about that, Eiji smiled wryly.

Back in his university days, there used to be lots of teachings that weren't useful when applied in a workshop.

It's reckless to produce goods while ignoring the procedure of quenching indicated by a steel manufacturer.

Being forced to apply his knowledge in practice was not an easy task; nevertheless, his master's words were absolute.

That's because, his master would make better things than himself.^[2]

Whenever he felt vexed, he could only give up.

Once he became able to make things, which were satisfactory by themselves, his father would let him make on his own.

Eiji was able to link the phenomena in front of his eyes with his own studied knowledge.

At first it didn't go smoothly, as he had to figure out how theory and practice bite each other.

— You won't know unless you try?

He wondered how much he was proud of these words.

– So you're done, aren't you? Good job there, you probably are tired.

– No, I'm fine.

– It's ok not to force yourself. It was probably your first time swinging a big hammer from beginning till end, right?

As soon as Pietro raised his tired arm and wiped the sweat running down his forehead, the crow of a chicken was heard outside.

It was the sign for noon.

The rooster would crow three times a day – in the morning, noon, and evening, becoming at the same time this village's clock.

Was it fighting for territory? Perhaps it was one of those fights for appealing. Once the rooster crowed the other ones began to crow one after another.

– Just the right timing. Let's take lunch and rest since it's noon.

– Understood.

Because Eiji told Tanya that he plans to set out for the workshop today, she should be bringing him a lunchbox or ingredients for

making food here.

Just when he wiped his sweat and cleaned the charcoal dirt from his body, Tanya's figure appeared at the gate. She was holding a basket in her hand.

- Eiji-san, I brought you lunch.
- Thank you as always. What's today menu?
- It's the thing called pizza, which Eiji-san told me.
- Oh, isn't it great? There's enough for Tanya too, so let's eat together.
- So we are eating together, right?
- You seem to be happy, aren't you?
- That's because, it has been a quite long since the last time we ate together, hasn't it?
- As soon as we entered winter season, it has been completely different.

Tanya approached the scene of fire at just the right time and took out dough, cheese, salami, and chopped onion from the basket. Once she did so, Tanya moved quickly and put them on a frying pan. Eiji operated the pair of bellows, making the charcoal fire burn strongly.

Using the furnace to make some grilled fishes was as side benefit of being a modern blacksmith.

The meal baked using charcoal was more delicious than using gas, which could hardly be compared.

And then, so as to keep the atmosphere inside the workplace from getting dry, the fireplace would be suspended at night. Therefore, they could always drink heated tea.

As Eiji was preparing the tea, Tanya was staring at the frying pan while waiting for the pizza to be done.

Finally, a nice and mixed smell of the baked dough, cheese and salami rose in the air.

- Ah... that's a nice smell, isn't it?
- Pietro, you cannot. This is mine and Tanya's lunch.
- Such a nice smell is killing me...

Once his stomach growled prominently, Pietro felt down with the appearance of being dejected.

Haa – his depressed look was that of a dog that hung down its ears and tail, which was amiable.

Saying that, Eiji didn't particularly have any malicious intention.

– Well, Pietro, you too, will probably have your lunch so.... Oh, speaking of rumors—

– Pietro made a girlfriend, right?

– That girl is just my childhood friend and not my girlfrie—

Good day – a loud voice of greeting was heard.

Suddenly, the appearance of a cute girl was seen from the gate.

Right after seeing that figure, Pietro's back shuddered for a moment.

– Pietro-kun, I brought you your lunchbox.

– Oh. Thank you.

– It would be nice to eat together.

– Look, Sara-chan, come sit in this chair.

As Tanya pat the chair next to Pietro, Sara nodded deeply and sat in it.

Sara and Pietro had the relationship of being half arranged in a marriage by their parents. In other words, Sara's father was the farmer, Bernard.

In case their compatibility was bad or they found another likable partner, their marriage would be cancelled; nevertheless, there seemed to be no need to worry about that.

Despite Pietro making a discouraged face, if you were to watch closer, you could understand that he was embarrassed, rather than dissatisfied.

As soon as the lunchbox was opened, the inside was arranged with a hard baguette, dried grapes and juglans. The reason why there was no eggs and meat was perhaps due to their today's menu.

It was Eiji's first winter here; nevertheless, in comparison with the transition between spring and autumn, winter was evidently much harsher.

The frequency of hunting fell with the snow piling up, and the number of proteins circulating in the village clearly reduced.

large amounts of winter pre-made cheese, yogurts, and preserved foods, like dried meat, ham, and bacon, as well as the collected

harvest, reduced day by day from the storehouse.

Eiji waited anxiously for the completion of the barn shed, which was highly anticipated for the growth in livestock.

- Eiji-san, it's done. Please say a~hn.
- Doing that in front of children is somehow embarrassing.
- A~hn.
- Erm, Tanya-san?
-
- A-A~hn, (sfx for holding something hot in mouth)
- How is the taste?

Tanya raised her eyes with anxiety while looking around restlessly.

- It's delicious.
- Ah, thank goodness...!

Inside his mouth, the cheese melted gooily.

The thick taste was of the mildness, which couldn't be compared with the one sold commercially. What's more, it was much more prominent.

The grilled onion gave a sharp stimulus with the sweetness. On top of that, there was the smooth olive added, which made the pizza quite delicious.

This was thanks to Tanya adding some of her imagination and creativity each day since being told of various recipes.

Indeed, Eiji got a nice wife.

Feeling both happiness and embarrassment, Eiji took a piece of pizza and fed Tanya in the same manner with 'A~hn'

Her mouth opened slightly as she gently held the tip of the pizza in her mouth.

- Isn't it delicious?
- ...It's so embarrassing I cannot tell the taste.
- Well, then shall we do it once more?
- It's embarrassing.
- That's fine. Because we have done it once, doing it one or two times won't change anything.
- E-Eiji-san, you are enjoying this too much!
- Is that so? I probably am. Even I can't quite understand it myself.

Tanya had the area around her eyes narrowed due to embarrassment. Eiji wanted to see that expression while encouraging her to eat the pizza.

She shook her head as if disagreeing; nevertheless, Eiji wouldn't allow that.

He couldn't resist seeing that embarrassed face of hers while making her finish the pizza.

Sniff sniff – Tanya expressed her sorrow with a fake cry. Seeing that, Eiji calmed down while drinking his tea.

I'm satisfied... – he thought.

Her appearance of a munching squirrel was incredibly cute.

Next to them, Pietro, who was about to eat his meal, and Sara, who was holding back her hand, were sitting.

– Hey, Sara.

– What, Pietro-kun?

– They might be newly-weds, but are adults supposed to flirt like that next to children?

– Are you jealous? We too shall do it. Alright, say A~hn!

– That's not what I meant! I was thinking why the master that I respect this much could be this spoiled.

– I think that's because he has done enough of a good job, so he's relaxing?

– I wonder about that...

– Thinking that way makes one happier?

– Ugh... just what should I believe...

– Rather than that, won't you eat? Alright, A~hn.

– O-ok.

Sara didn't care about the agony of a disciple being at loss about his respect for master.

Hearing the words, which pierced through the peculiar nature of his childhood, Pietro became even more worried.

Taking this opportunity, Sara repeated the same manner 10 times using her upturned eyes, which aimed with an accuracy that was nowhere to be seen. Pietro could only accept it whether or not he wanted.

The way how Sara provided him with the meal looked as though a

parent bird was feeding its chick.

The sweet atmosphere that seemed to cause nausea in other people, spread through the workshop, which stank with iron.

—— After that, the miniatures were safely completed and displayed at the gate.

They were later said to hold strange property, which irritated unmarried people to the extent that they couldn't be thought of as inorganic items.

Notes

1. Yes, he said sword.
2. I think the reason why the author divided that sentence into syllables was to emphasize Eiji's annoyance at that fact.

Chapter 34 – Reversi

What are you making this time? – being asked by Tanya, Eiji made a wry smile.

Somehow, it seemed that whenever he was working inside the household, it would be associated with him making something new.

Good grief – he thought. Because it was just as she said, there was no space for him to deny; nevertheless, he tried to answer half-jokingly by saying – You know, I do other things besides inventing.

For example, recently I've...- while pondering about that, he thought inside as he noticed – Eh, that's right; I really have been doing nothing but developing products.

I wonder if it will be better to spend a bit more time in the household? No, it should be fine – thought Eiji.

He had been continuously polishing his skills, so focusing more on skinship should be fine.

Once he coughed as if trying to deceive her, Eiji smiled.

That's because the development this time was something that Tanya will enjoy.

– Today I was thinking about trying to reproduce an entertainment that I know and used to play a bit.

– You mean this board and the round chips that are smeared black on one side?

– It's a game called Reversi or Othello. It will be easier to have you understand by doing it in practice.

– I'm not that bright, so if it's something difficult, it will be impossible for me to do.

– Don't you worry. The rules are simple.

The surface of the Reversi board was made from wood.

There were 64 squares in an 8×8 pattern on the board.

In addition to that board, there were 64 stone pieces.

Just as the name suggested, they were made of a stone consisting of attached black and white stones.

Eiji explained the rules while playing the game.

It is a simple rule, where you turn your opponent's stones into the

same color by getting them between.

Once Tanya, who had never played an enjoyable game, nodded and remembered the rules, she quickly became enthusiastic about it.

And then, they continued to play several times.

- Aaahh! I've lost again!
- 34 against 30. It was a hard win.
- You're only taking the corners, that's mean!
- No, this is how you play the game.
- You're mean, mean!

Was it because she lost many times that she felt hurt? While staring at his wife who made a sullen face just like a child, Eiji soothed her. However, his hand was shaken off as if being a bother.

Despite her having an adult and calm personality, seeing how she becomes a child was indeed cute.

Reversi is actually a deep thinking game, which doesn't just ends with taking the corners. There exists strategies based on middle distributing and taking borders; nevertheless, in order to grasp the concept of a 'settled stone piece' which can't be reversed, taking the corners is the fastest way for that.

- This time I'm going to take the corners and win, you'll see!
- How do you plan to do that?
- I'm thinking!

Hmm hmm – staring at the board's surface, Tanya was thinking of her first move.

She was thinking; nevertheless, moving her target left and right on the board, she couldn't decide where to make her first move.

It is also said that the game may be influenced on whether you make the first or second move.

Eiji watched attentively at her with a feeling of looking at something adorable.

Seeing how his wife got hooked into the game, just as he planned it to be, made him glad.

With such a good mood, Eiji wondered whether or not he could create several of these boards and make the game popular inside the village.

He thought about presenting this little bit of amusement to the village, which never had any type of entertainment besides talking. Imagining their glad looks, Eiji put a smile on his face.

Placing properly the stone pieces and advancing the game. The surface of the board was almost dyed in white.

- I've lost again!
- Shouldn't we end this soon?
- One more, one more time!
- Will this really be the last? We have been doing this for quite a long time.
- I know!

Tanya continued to lose, getting irritated at the end. Despite Eiji going easy on her to some extent, he still was unskillful in dealing with games, in which he had to lose deliberately.

- Lost again!
- The next challenge will be tomorrow. I'm going to sleep.
- No! Let's do one more time.
- If it's a night challenge, I'll do it as many times as you want.
- Eh?!

The snow continued to fall.

On such a day, farm works, as well as lumbering, were suspended by everyone.

At least, the labor would be limited to outdoors works, such as snow shoveling.

Even the villagers would probably endeavor in making finished leather goods as their side job, or mend their households.

After each of the executives, who gathered inside the tribal chief's house, finished the discussion, a Reversi board was placed on the table and everyone sat facing each other.

Reversi was accepted in no time among the villagers and enjoyed.

Because there were not enough of them for the entertainment purpose, a system of mass production was quickly adopted, making each household now possess one.

Shaving off stones and attaching them to each other took quite much

of time; however, nobody would expect everyone to be that enthusiastic about the game.

That alone was probably enough for enduring the boredom during winter.

Mike and Eiji faced each other while enjoying the game.

Taking a quick glimpse, it seemed Mike's black pieces were dominating.

Mike's pieces covered 8/10ths of the board, whereas, Eiji's had almost none.

Trusting in his victory while being totally immersed in a superiority complex, Mike smiled toward Jane sitting next to him.

However, one can't tell until a game over.

Reversi is a game where big turn-arounds are possible with the last move.

Eiji confirmed with prudence the squares on the board, which he could use.

– No, indeed it's an interesting game.

– That's true. Because it's simple, it's easy to memorize. Therefore, anyone ranging from children to elderly can play this, right?

– Good grief, I've long since been thinking about using my knowledge for making something like this. Isn't it, wifey?

– You, even though you didn't come up with this, you're saying some bold things aren't you?

– Hey hey, I'm enjoying myself, so don't stare at me. Well, with this, I gained control over two of the corners, so it is my victory for sure..... Wha, wha?!

Just right after Eiji placed his piece, the situation took a sudden change.

Clap clap clap – the stone pieces were reversed; what's more, it was a situation which couldn't be reversed back.

It was a technique called 'C hitting', in which you place your own piece at the furthest side of the 'border', after letting the enemy deliberately take the corners.

Mike's triumphant face distorted into a vexed one immediately. Seeing that, Jane meanly burst into laughter.

– Because you're dumb, you shouldn't have been careless till the

end.

- S-shut up, I'll turn this around again.
- Heh? I've got the feeling like your lost is settled, but oh well.
- The left side is still not settled. Once I take the remaining two corners, I'll turn this around.
- Well, at least you're doing your best. But, Fernando, you too, are strong ain't you? Just a while ago, I couldn't win against you no matter how many times I tried.
- That was accidental. Still, I've got the feeling like I can somehow grasp its rules.

Fernando was shrugging his shoulders while being modest. On the other hand, Mike, who was about to lose, raised a hoarse cry.

Shut up – As Jane swung down with her clenched fist; she too, seemed to sustain a certain loss.

- We will be changing opponents soon. Jane, I'll let you know you who among the spouses is better.
- Aside from having hunting and tanning skills, you're completely useless. If you think you can win against me, you are going to have a painful experience.

While collecting their pieces, Jane and Mike moved to their seats.

It's fine to watch them, still, should I look for an opponent myself? – Eiji thought.

He looked at Fernando, who lost his opponent as well.

- Shall we give it a try?
- No, somehow, just the fact that you spread this game makes you look strong. I'll hate losing to you, so I'm going to pass.

Fernando was one of the quickest people to deeply grasp the principles of this game.

Til now he had been victorious, so hee probably didn't want to stop that winning streak.

Spectating from the side is also interesting, so should I wait 'til other people are done? – thought Eiji.

Both Bona and Philip were immersed in the game without uttering a single word.

The state of the battle was even for both, with Bona having a bit more of an advantage.

Bernard and Giorgio had a social conversation about things, such as 'I wonder if it will be sunny tomorrow', while having only their sight focused on the board.

– Alright, well then, Jane. If I win this time, I'll have you make me an additional course for dinner.

– As you wish. However, if I win, I'll have your side dish.

– Keep dreaming!

Betting their dinner, both of them became increasingly enthusiastic.

I wonder whether they ain't too hooked?

Eiji thought so; nevertheless, there would be no excuse in hindering people having fun.

However, the first step toward shaking the whole village was certain that moment.

A problem that was yet to arise will become later the topic of discussion.

– Gambling activities?

– That's right. At first they were adorable things, such as side dish or a single egg, but recently the number of them has increased like a joke. It is no longer a problem at an individual level.

Haa – Having Bona, who exhaled deeply, in front of him, Eiji too didn't feel like doing it.

So it's gambling?

He didn't have much of experience in gambling.

Even during his university years, he would try horse betting and pachinko^[1] once or twice; nevertheless, he wouldn't get addicted.

Mahjong was as well fun, however, as soon as the money was involved, he would withdraw.

Eiji liked challenges, but once he realized his personality of getting too zealous into games, he withdrew before he would cross the line and destroy himself.

Even though he heard about there being people who sustained great losses due to gambling, Eiji could only think whether he too isn't

partially responsible.

Nevertheless, he felt guilty for having introduced Reversi, at the same time, giving the foundation for gambling.

– For you to say that there was a great loss incurred, certainly, there was someone behind those huge bets. Who won them?

– It's Fernando.

– Isn't he one of the village executives? ...Can't you just forcefully tell him to return the goods?

– Perhaps if I say it strongly, he will yield, but it might leave a bad aftertaste for him. What's more, there's no guarantee that he won't be aiming for another gamble while causing us risk.

– That's well... indeed it's true that people, who are bad at losing, will remain bad losers.

– Saying that, we will counter gambling with gambling.

– And therefore, you came to ask me.

– Yes. It seems that you and Fernando still haven't fought each other.

– Yea, that's because I was refused the previous time when I tried to ask him.

– I probably won't become a challenge for him. I'll set the table, so will you agree to take him as your opponent?

Somehow, Eiji had the feeling that he wouldn't gain much from this.

Originally, he would prefer to have his reward by using his own bet to win.

However much of a request it is, is there really a need to return everything back? And how about a probable risk of losing?

Even for this kind of problem, Bona prepared a satisfactory answer.

-If you lose, I'll take the responsibility and pay. After that, I'll completely ban any gambling. In case Eiji wins, I'll have you pass me everything, but, I'll make sure that you get your rightful part when we distribute the rations.

So in the end, it's the tribal chief who will take the responsibility?

In that case, winning doesn't seem to be half bad. – he thought.

– Understood. I'll do it.

– Sorry for that. Had I won that time...

– So you challenged him too?! What's more you lost.

It was the harshest type of retort in one's life.

– I was joking.

Seeing the old woman's adorable wink, Eiji became unable to complain back and dropped his shoulders with a collapsing sound.

The stage was arranged at the tribal chief's house.

The people who lost the bet and the other executives gathered in the house, watching the match between two people as the spectators.

Hearing that the bet consisted of the total amount, Eiji felt tension unintentionally, despite him knowing he held no responsibility.

It also seemed that there was no other option than for the tribal chief to take her part in solving this problem.

Despite saying so, there was even someone who bet their yearly portion of bread.

Just how on earth did that person plan to eat? – he wondered.

– Eiji-san, are you fine?

– I'm quite nervous. I don't plan to lose, but...

– You haven't lost 'til now, have you?

– Tanya-san has become quite skillful, right? It seems that the day for me to lose is close.

– If it turns out like that, It will be truly nice, but...

Sitting in the chair, Eiji confirmed the number of stone pieces.

The number of the stones stored inside the box was without doubt 32.

Taking one, two deep breathes, Eiji felt his heart calming down and gazed at the front.

Having a continuous winning streak, Fernando probably believed in his victory, as he fiddled with a stone while putting an expression full of confidence on his face.

Two of the pieces were placed in the middle. The preparation was set.

Do your best! – Hearing the support coming from Tanya behind his back, Eiji became overflowing with motivation as he commenced a

battle of words with Fernando.

- You have won way too many times, haven't you? Had you withdraw in the right moment, you would have kept that nice memento.
- I will win this one, so there should be no problem with that.
- I wonder if you can say the same after it's finished.
- Right back at ya'.

The first move was decided by a stone tossing.

Once the stone was flipped with a thumb, it revolved in the midair while being indiscernible to one's eyes, and then, it fell into Eiji's palm.

- Black.
- So it's black, isn't it? Well then, please go ahead. —I'll show you the taste of defeat.

The first stone piece was placed with a clap on the board.

Reversi is a game where the more it progresses, the less choices there are.

Presently, not all of the patterns applied by the best players, known as 'The divine moves', have been clarified; nevertheless, there existed an established tactic for those who begin their first move as second.

Eiji remembered a popular tactic like that.

Even the names were easy to remember, such as 'the horse tactic' or 'the tiger tactic'. Lots of them were named after animals.

The key factors in learning a tactic were: observing how the first stage of the game progress in accordance with the tactic, and being able to place pieces without the need of forcing oneself.

- Your placements are quite fast, aren't they?
- That's because we have just started.

Fernando asked suspiciously; nevertheless, Eiji dodged his question. Starting from four middle squares, the board continued to be covered with ovals. The game entered the middle phase.

Fernando is strong. Indeed he has grasped the foundation of the game. – thought Eiji.

Were he to play it normally, he would probably be unable to beat Fernando.

Eiji felt that directly.

In Reversi there existed a firm strategy.

Such as reducing your opponent's choices and increasing your own, and then, luring your opponent into placing on the desirable squares.

Because of that, however many pieces there are in either the first or middle stage, it won't matter.

The best form of displacement is the one where the enemy's stones surround your own.

Such a basic technique also exists by the name of 'middle displacement'.

It is also important to create such a state, where your enemy has to pass, making it easy for you to place.

The current situation on the board was exactly like that.

– Hey....Hey... just when did you—?

– Well, what will you do?

– Give me some time for thinking.

– Go ahead.

After muttering while being taken aback, Fernando began to focus on the board.

He was probably reading 2, 3 moves ahead; nevertheless, it didn't seem to contribute much to the game's development.

Soon he had almost no choices remaining. At such a situation he could do nothing but take disadvantageous moves.

– Damn, one of the corners was taken.

– The game won't end with one corner being taken, but...

– Just say it!

Once Fernando, who had shown a rare and rude tone, contemplated again, he immersed himself deeply into reading the movements on the board.

Drinking an herb tea, Eiji awaited the next move from Fernando. While doing so, one of the spectators, Mike, spoke.

– Hey, how is the game progressing?

- I took complete control over the bottom right corner. With the opposite corner and the top right one still being not settled, there's a high chance for me to subjugate the bottom left one.
- Honestly, the level is way too high. I don't get what kind of reasoning you apply while placing the stones, but do your best. I too have lost some high-grade leather, made from Sable.

Tapping Eiji's shoulders, Mike returned to his original place.

Was Fernando done with thinking? While smiling prominently, he placed the stone on a certain point.

- Should I aim for X hitting...?
- What's that?
- You place a piece on the C square next to the corner and create a slope which is known as X hitting.
- Heh? I didn't know about that.
- Still, this is...

'X hitting' is a high level move where you can aim for a sudden change with a single hit by placing a decisive piece next to a corner, which you let your opponent gain control of.

The more you read into a game, the more it becomes a free-for-all fight, where the outcome can't be predicted.

That's weird – thought he, as a while ago he was still predominant.

He could feel the surrounding of his stomach being firmly clutched.

Calm down – Eiji told himself while maintaining his deep breathing.

He wiped the sudden sweat that gushed out with his hand.

Unlike before when he had more room for thinking, this time Eiji couldn't help but to further focus on the board.

Clap clap – each time a stone piece was placed, a little bit of a blank atmosphere was accompanied.

Without time to crack jokes at each other, the two of them concentrated on the board.

Before one could notice, the inside of the tribal chief's house turned into a silence where only the breathing of two people was heard. In addition to that, a tense atmosphere was felt in the air.

Shifting his eyes from the board, Eiji looked around.

Bona nodded at him deeply.

If he loses, a large amount of assets will be lost.

When it comes to a yearly food provision, it will be an even more serious amount.

Despite him being told of not having to take responsibility, it still wouldn't make the burden on his back any lighter.

Behind Eiji, Tanya put her hands together while praying.

Even though he said he was confident in winning, it still wouldn't mean that he was going to win.

Tanya, who was a spectator, could only wish for the best outcome for him.

There's no reason for him to lose; nevertheless, it was a situation in which he couldn't be certain of the victory.

Every time a piece was placed, the victory lead would shift back and forth, just like in seesaw game.

Will he win? Or perhaps lose?

The progress of the game was extremely dangerous.

As soon as the game entered the last stage, the board created the situation of taking each other's 'borders'.

Once they reached this part, the settled pieces were placed one after another, making the progress become more clear.

Eiji made a difficult expression; it was the same for Fernando.

Both of them were drenched with sweat on their faces, which didn't make it seem like it was winter.

It felt as though the result can't be predicted.

However, with each pieces being placed, the game was soon to conclude.

Finally, the outcome arrived.

– 33 to 31? That was a narrow margin, wasn't it?

– To think that it would end with such outcome....

The top of the board was buried with all 64 pieces.

At first glance, the pieces looked equally distributed.

There is no doubt it was a close contest. The opening stage was dominated by Eiji, whereas, the middle one belonged to Fernando.

It was a level where both of them displayed their full potential.

– It's your win———Eiji-kun.

- Thank you. Nevertheless, I'll restrain myself from playing you the next time as I've had enough. You're truly strong.
- I too, will be taking a rest. My head feels exhausted.....*sigh*, I thought I would be making a wild merrymaking, but guess things don't go smoothly, do they?

Fernando took Eiji's hand and raised it high.

Woahhhh – voices were raised as the spectators approached them both.

It seemed that even the people who had their debt cancelled due to their loss were glad.

Anyway, I'm tired – he thought.

Eiji wondered when the last time he amused himself while exerting his knowledge to this extent was. He didn't seem to remember.

- Good job. As expected, my husband is an incredible person.
- It seems that I managed it somehow. Its fine as long your grandmother is content, but she had put quite a trouble burden on me, hadn't she? Also, she will fulfill her promise, so let's look forward to that.
- Thank you Eiji. I'll treat you with a stew this time.
- And me, with beans. (Bernard)
- I got my bread back! I too, won't bet anymore, or at least I think I probably won't do so.....

Tanya, who smiled at him, gave Eiji a cup of wine together with a wet towel.

He drank the wine and wiped his face clean from the sweat.

His heart felt nervous; nevertheless, seeing Tanya's glad look, it felt as though the tension loosened.

- My goodness, I'm dead tired.
- Once we return, let's play it together.
- No, I don't think there will be again chance for that.
- *disappointed*, do you intend quit while being ahead?

After that, gambling with goods was forbidden, and those, who were spotted, would be punished and forced to return the bet to the losers. With that, the Reversi gambling incident concluded.

By the request of the majority, Reversi was allowed to be played at

home using chips that were adorably designed.

Later on, there would be other incidents occurring, such as the daifugou^[2] incident and the Poker incident, however, that is a story for the next time.

Eiji and Tanya would receive river fishes, dried meat, and a small amount of wheat bread on a daily basis and distribute that small happiness between each other.

The outcome of their later competitions would remain untold by the villagers.

Notes

1. Japanese type of a slot machine: [Wikipedia](#).
2. Japanese type of a card game: [Wikipedia](#)

Chapter 35 – The Beginning of the Animal Shed Construction

Chapter 35 – The Beginning of the Animal Shed Construction.^[1]

Outside, the snow piled up with the cold weather. The men, who were drenched with sweat, exhaled white breath while exerting themselves in an engineering work.

The ground covered with snow was even firmer than the one during summer.

The men now dug up the soil not by using hoes but with pickaxes.

One of them was digging holes, whereas, the other gathered the excavated soil into the wheelbarrow, and yet another person transported the lumps of earth and sand.

– Hey, you're slow! Thomas, don't slack and give them properly the instructions.

Fernando, who wouldn't lose that easygoing attitude of his, threw out severe rebukes while continuing the demarcation of the planned construction area.

He was properly dealing with the work and didn't seem to the same problematic person who caused the reversi incident the other day.

Eiji, Mike, and Bona were staring at the situation from a distance. Even if you look from far away, you can understand what kind of building was under construction.

It had a shape of a rectangle and was 6 meters wide in the north-south direction and 30 some-odd meters long in east-west direction.

Bona was in charge of the whole project.

Holding a cane in one hand, she directed her sharp eyes toward the working villagers.

- Today we are going to distribute lots of wheat bread.
- Oh, seriously?! Ain't you too generous, Grandma?
- They're doing a group work for the sake of the village, so I have to

reward them a little bit. You too, If you want your share, you better work!

- Ah, no. I've been busy with processing the hunted rabbits. It's a pity that I can't eat some of the bread.
- You really are all talk and no action.
- I too, am doing what I ought to do.
- I know about that. I'm just telling that you're going too far with your mouth.

It seemed that Mike was weak against women.

He would lose an argument against Bona. What's more, even now he couldn't talk back to her reprimand. Despite saying so, there was no way for him to fall in public esteem.

His hunting skills were superior, and when it was important, he would have enough guts to take the initiative and get going.

- Speaking of which, why is it necessary to build this animal shed?
- About that, I explained during the previous meeting, didn't I?
- No you see, I thought it would be fine to leave things to you, so I neither paid attention nor listened at that time. Sorry.
- This fool is...!
- Awwie, please don't hit me with that cane!

No, as expected, will that person really be fine? – Eiji wondered.

Did he notice the cold look from Eiji? Mike apologized while scratching his head in embarrassment.

Despite them trying to deal with Mike sincerely, they breathed a blatant sigh.

-Please brace yourself, because we need Fero ^[2] to move around as well.
- This time it will be fine.
- I'll take your word for it' works better.
- Leave it to me, the only hunter in Siena.
- Please, won't you explain to this fool, so that he understands?

There was probably not much of relationship between a hunter and urban planning.

Suppressing his urge of wanting to retort, Eiji explained to Mike about the reason behind building an animal shed.

- Well then, shall I give you some questions regarding the present condition?
- Easy, leave it to me.
- Mike-san, can you grasp how many eggs one chicken in this village can produce in a single year?
- Yes, if I consider the ones which I'm raising at my household, it will be around 20 eggs.
- That's right. What's more you remembered well, didn't you?
- That's because we eat eggs as well, so even I ought to remember.

Ahem – Mike puffed his chest out with pride.

No, it's nothing particular to boast about. – Eiji thought.

A domesticated chicken is an unusually excellent animal.

It doesn't fear humans and can eat bugs together with grass, so leaving it would be fine.

Furthermore, it cannot fly far like a normal bird.

And once it becomes night, it will obediently return to its shed, so it's easy to control.

- I've checked and it seems that every household has roughly 5 chickens. 1 of which is a rooster and the rest, hens.
- You've checked it well.
- Had I not investigate it beforehand, I wouldn't have been able to suggest the plan. Not to mention, the number of roosters is scarce, isn't it?
- Well, you can only make a rooster that can't produce eggs into meat. For mating, only one will be enough.

– And then, the number of eggs which a single household can get yearly is around 80. Because several of them might hatch, if there are 6 households, a single person can eat about 16 per year, right?

Of course it varied depending on each household's structure.

If it's Tanya and Eiji, each of them can eat 58 eggs.

Eiji forecasted that each of them could eat 1 per weekend; nevertheless, since there were many family households, eggs were considered as highly valuable products.

Eiji also thought that increasing the number of chickens raised will yield good results.

Still, if a food shortage occurs due to a bad weather, the chicken will be digested before the increase can even take place.

During the festival of abundant harvest, lots of eggs were used; however, that many would only amount for a single day in a year.

– This is how it presently looks. By the way, the talk now was just a speculation. Do you know that depending on the type of chicken, there are ones which can lay a lot of eggs, but also ones that will only lay some?

– Oh, if some clever guy tries to steal eggs, the chicken will notice that.

A chicken has a strange nature.

Once it enters its egg-laying period, it can produce at a pace of one per day and continue until it accumulates 5 of them.

Perhaps, it can be due to them being only able to count till 5.

Saying that, an owner of chickens will secretly try to steal one, making the chicken, which hasn't noticed, lay an egg again while thinking that there are only 4.

After that, it's a matter of time whether it will notice its eggs being stolen or not.

If there are chickens that will notice and stop laying after 2-3 thefts, there will be as well those that can continue to lay more than 30.

In other words, even if you steal one egg when there are more than 6, the chicken won't lay any new eggs.

As expected, it could be due to it being unable to count above 5.

– That's what I mean. Let's make it so that there are only chickens which can lay lots of eggs.

– Uh, I don't understand the meaning behind your words.

What Eiji thought was to crossbreed chickens that can lay lots of eggs as much as possible and raise the ones which can be fecund.

For that to happen, it's better to separate and control chickens so as to pursue the desirable change much easier.

– If we do so, this is raising the chickens in a shed, will the number of eggs produced till now become double as many?

– It won't yield immediate results, but...

– Somehow it feels like a talk pulled from a dream, doesn't it? Is it

really possible to force a fecund chicken to produce even more eggs?

– I wonder if there were people back in my country that would eat at least one egg per day.

For people here, it felt as though they couldn't comprehend what he said, just like Eiji the law of genes from Mendel's laws.^[3]

Hearing Eiji's words, Mike was left open-mouthed.

Probably he wouldn't imagine that to be possible as he shook his head from disbelief.

– That would be nice, wouldn't it?

– Currently, it's still difficult, but I want this plan to become real sooner or later.

– Oh, me too, I want this to happen.

– A place where nobody will starve, isn't it wonderful?

– If you can achieve that, I shall revere you as a god.

– Please stop that.

– No, for there to be no one to starve, that's my dearest wish. This much alone is incredible.

Eiji didn't particularly consider that as amazing.

He wanted to object; nevertheless, he was forced to gulp down his words.

It just happened to be that the environment, in which Eiji grew-up, was more advanced. He's being praised for having knowledge outside of his craft, knowledge which is not his own findings. Eiji felt guilty no matter what he would try to do.

Were he to be praised as a blacksmith, he would accept that genuinely, however...

Eiji thought that there was a need to convey his knowledge, even if it was just a little bit.

He didn't know how much use his knowledge would become, however, passing down what he knows and the items he creates will probably lead to this village's development.

– Despite saying so, we still have to feed the chickens?

– For the beginning, we will let the chickens run free at each noon.

- At that rate, won't the the chickens mixed with each other, making it difficult for us to discern?
- We will surround them with a fence so as not to let that happen.
- Is it really going to prevent that from happening?
- Now that it has come to this, we have to carry out the plan thoroughly. Otherwise, there will be no meaning in building the shed.
- Haa.... I wish it would be much more comfortable.

Good grief – once Mike shrugged with his shoulders, the cane was swung at him again.

- Speaking of which, Eiji, thanks for the explanation. Please treat me well from now on.
- No, thanks to that, I had you remember this time. I think it might be hard from now on so...
- Well, I wonder if it won't be too much for him. This guy is an idiot after all.
- Don't speak of people as idiots!
- Then at least remember the talks during the meetings, will you?
- Gu... got it.

Eiji and Bona's laughing voice reverberated through the surrounding.

- Ugh, so heavyyyy!
- Ugh...pff....ugh.
- Hey, Eiji. Don't force yourself. Because you normally lack power, you will just kill your back
- Didn't I tell you that I would help?
- On the contrary, you will become a burden. Nuoooh ^[4]

We are short of people, so how about you help us.

Being told to help in the animal shed construction, Eiji was now driving a huge pillar into its foundation.

The pillar that was raised inside the shed was big enough to be carried completely under arms by 2 adults.

Eiji didn't expect this size of a pillar to be needed; however, in the

end, it was Fernando doing the layout.

If he meddles, or if the pillar collapses, the work won't meet its aim. Thinking so, he put all his effort into this laborious work.

Eiji was much tougher than he was originally, still, his body hadn't undergone any physical labor besides smithing.

Therefore, it can't be helped to say that he lacked a bit in power when trying to drive in the huge pillar.

To think that Philip would cut and carry off this unprocessed lumber every day.

While having that thought, Eiji felt respect for that uncommunicative lumberjack.

As expected, forcing oneself to do manual labor for a long time would be seen as a hindrance by those muscular farmers around him, who decided to replace Eiji.

Just where did the chilly weather vanish to? – While wiping his sweat and loosening the fatigue from his arms, Fernando approached.

– Hey Eiji-kun, are you able to use the saw?

– I can generally use all the tools I make. Of course, I'm no match against a pro, still...

– If so, then come assist me.

– Got it.

The place he was led to was Fernando's carpentry.

Inside the workplace, there was lumber with black ink marking for a straight cutting scattered around the place.

One could make 10-12 from that number.

In order to build a single building, was this much lumber required?

Being unaware of that fact until now, Eiji was surprised at this fresh experience.

– First, I'd like you to cut accordingly to that black ink lines on the lumber. Because everyone is still unfamiliar with the saw, the work won't progress at this rate.

– In the first place, I made it to match Fernando's skills.

– Is that so?

– I made it thinly so that it's easier to cut. That being the case, the number of people that can use this saw is limited. That's why, from

the very beginning, it isn't meant to be something operated by an inexperienced person.

- It really feels like I can do my works smoothly.
- That's because you can use this saw that you think that way.
- I'm not referring to me.
- Eh?
- You probably make tools while considering each user's special traits. By this I meant to say that I can do my works smoothly.

What Fernando said wasn't necessarily limited to only the saw. Even a single hoe was made thin and light so as to allow the people dig soil more proficiently.

That way it would lessen the impact transmitted back to one's hands, and with the hoe being light, it would let its user work long hours without getting tired.

Thanks to that, gathering valuable materials would take less time, making it beneficial for both the user and the recipient.

- Well, because I'm the only one usually using the saw, there should be no problem?
- I see. However, cutting this wood that thinly, do you intend to make a plank from that?
- Yeah, we need them for making walls.

The blueprint, which Fernando showed, had an unusually extravagant way of managing the space.

It was a large-scale construction for the future anticipation.

The inside was built with unusually big cages, each for a single bird, so that it will let them move around freely.

The cages were furnished with numerous doors to the outside in order to make it possible for half pasture of the chickens during the day.

Eiji looked forward to its completion.

- Well then, with that I'll entrust you with the task.
- Leave it to me.

There were also those blacksmiths who would make patterns by themselves.

Eiji's family didn't consist of that type of blacksmith; nevertheless, making small adjustments was their forte.

They would be able to use saws and planes dexterously.

Eiji placed and fixed his leg on the lumber while carefully sawing along the lines.

Once he will hit firmly to obtain the initial angle, the later direction of the saw will progress at his own convenience.

Moving the saw, his expression was radiating with a joy similar to that of children.

Notes

1. I've decided to use 'animal shed' instead of cattle shed, which is more accurate. I made a mistake by blindly following what the dictionary suggested. Sorry for that.
2. It's how the tribal chief refers to Fernando by his nickname.
3. I know it sound weird, but this is how the author choose to make comparisons.
4. Imagine it as a sound you make when desperately trying to force yourself.

Chapter 36 – The Raid

Being exhausted from the manual labor intrinsic to constructing the barn, Eiji felt that it was the same type of harsh fatigue that accompanied him the first time he had arrived at this world.

During that time, he would often fall into a deep and dreamless sleep.

If there were nights like that, then there were as well the ones during which he couldn't fall asleep because fatigue.

On such days, he would turn over in his bed many times while feeling impatient.

If I don't fall asleep quickly, I'll become a hindrance tomorrow – were his thoughts.

Eiji would try various methods in order to fall asleep, such as counting sheep and taking a series of deep breaths, despite knowing that they were meaningless. In the end, they weren't much of help.

Next to him, Tanya was sleeping soundly.

Staring at her peaceful face, Eiji felt it was stupid of him to get impatient.

On the other hand, straining his ears, Eiji could sense the presence of their domesticated wild boars inside the darkness.

As soon as he rose up from the bed, he put on a coat and went outside.

Looking up, there was a stretching sky full of stars.

Was it because there were no lights around? Or perhaps because of the clear atmosphere? Since he arrived in this place, there was not a single day in which he wouldn't be surprised at how many stars can be seen.

And then the moon, it wouldn't change.

It was still too early for a full moon; nevertheless, it brightly illuminated the surface.

If one were to look around, lit houses were nowhere to be seen.

It felt as though the only person unable to sleep right now was he

himself.

Eiji thought about there being people with lots of physical strength in his hometown, despite that...he couldn't help but be surprised at how strong the villagers were.

Once he thought so, a howl of a wild animal was heard from distance.

– A dog? ...No, a wolf?

The howls wouldn't end with a single time.

Probably there were many animals howling, as the number of the howls increased with the second and third round.

Could it be that they were sending signals?

The extent of the sounds grew.

Just how many of them are there...? – he thought.

The number of howls continued to increase, making it no longer to be considered as something common.

– Mike-san...? Jane-san, and even Tanya-san.

Each of them went out from their house and stared at the east part of the forest.

Even Tanya that was supposed to be soundly sleeping woke up and went outside. Seeing that, Eiji felt uneasy.

That kind of response wasn't something usual.

He went to her first and asked the reason behind such a reaction.

Tanya had a clear expression that couldn't be thought of as being asleep.

She was completely awake.

– Eiji-san has woken up as well, haven't you?

– No, I was already awake.

– Was that so? Did you hear it?

– You mean the wolves howling.

– Yes, it seems that we will be taking a countermeasure soon, I think.

– A countermeasure?

– Since Eiji-san too will be called to join up, I believe, I'll explain it to

you ahead.

Due to the wolves assaulting domestic livestock, especially sheep, goats, and chickens, there was a need for preventing that using the men from the village.

Because the time in which the wolves appear is during the night, the women would move all their livestock inside their houses and fences, and the men go outside for the hunting.

– Judging from the number of howls, I think there is a considerable number of them. Last year, they wouldn't appear, but...

Looking at Tanya, who had a serious expression on her face, Eiji understood that it was quite a bad situation.

Under normal circumstances, their food supply and production would be at the limit.

Were they to have their livestock reduced by wolves, they would incur a heavy blow.

Mike, who noticed this side, approached with a trot.

Unlike his usually slacken expression, this time he had a stern one.

– Did you guys notice as well?

– I was already awake.

– There's no way for one to sleep after hearing those sounds.

– It would seem so. I too became wide awake. Eiji, what were you doing before that?

– Actually, I just couldn't sleep.

– Well, that's fine. Tanya-chan please go reconfirm that your chickens are right, and Eiji come to the gathering place with me.

Even while heading toward the tribal chief's house, Mike made sure about the safety of each household together with their livestock and ordered the participation of the men.

At that moment, everyone's faces were stern.

Just how will it turn out? – he thought. It was Eiji's first ever experience.

Will they fight using blades, or using bows?

Or perhaps, they will lay traps?

Whichever method it was, there was no end to the danger.

Eiji was raised in a peaceful country, where nobody would carry a weapon.

If considering accidents and death from diseases as separate instances, people would rarely see someone die instantly.

Because of that, Eiji couldn't imagine how things would turn out.

Will I be able to survive through this turmoil?

No matter how much he pondered, the answer wouldn't come.

Siena is a village based on animal husbandry.

Despite them running their business on agriculture, their trade would mainly consist of products obtained from leather processing.

Naturally, what its villagers raised weren't just cattle and pigs.

Because a single person could move and feed a large number of sheep and goats, meat and fur became much more common.

One of those shepherds was now standing in the gathering place while having a heartbroken face.

– I think it's probably because of me that the wolves appeared this time.

– Why should that be?

– Because there was little grass on the grazing land, I thought of trying to search for a new place and went closer to the forest than usual. Perhaps, the forest was the territory of those wolves, I think. They didn't attack us on the spot, but they probably followed. 3 of my sheep were slaughtered by them.

– That's a pity, however, once we hunt them down, you might be able to go closer to the forest, so don't feel depressed.

– Everyone, I'm sorry.

Mike tapped the shepherd's shoulders while consoling him.

It seemed that this time Mike was in charge of this gathering.

Bona, who sat at the head of the table, didn't utter anything for a while.

– From now on, we will decide on groups for the wolf extermination.

Some of you will remain inside the village while others will go outside. Those who will go are Me, Philip, Fernando, Giorgio, Mike——

Names of the men villagers were called out one by another.

Those who were from the younger generation wouldn't be called.

It seemed that the criterion for choosing people were men who were at least 20+ years old.

Certainly, leaving this job to children that were still immature in strength would be too much of a burden for them.

– ——and Eiji.

– Y-Yes.

– Because it's your first time, you don't have to worry. I'm not telling you to stay in front, so first, I'll have you get used and stay from behind.

– Got it.

Once he was called by his name, Eiji gave out a nervous voice without realizing.

As expected, while facing the wolves, will he be able to move? Or will he be dragging other people's legs? Even now, there was not a slightest bit of confidence gushing inside of him.

– Well then, is it fine to dissolve today's meeting?

– Hmm, I'll entrust you with the task this time. Manage them as much as you want.

– Right, break up everyone.

Because that day they couldn't make preparations, it was decided they would go on a patrol the next day.

Each of them would prepare their own weapon, such as spears, bows, and pitchforks.

Since Eiji was obstinate not to make weapons, he could only use a bronze-made spear.

It would have been fine to make arrowheads, had he known about them being used that way.

It's no use crying over spilled milk. If he manages to return safely, Eiji thought about making some of them for a countermeasure

against damage caused by wild beasts.

After they had been told to breakup, they went back to their houses in succession.

Their steps were heavy and everyone was cautious.

On his way back, Eiji walked the path together with Mike.

- However, will the wolves come once again?
- There's no doubt about that. Those guys are persistent once they spot their prey.
- Is that so?

Mike's words were filled with belief.

It was also an assertion that came from his deep understanding of animals as a hunter, more than anyone else.

His manner of speaking, which allowed no place for obscurity, overshadowed that usual and foolish attitude of his, making him look, frankly speaking, cool.

- Think. A delicious fodder consisting of sheep is gathered all over the place. From their point of view, it would be a suitable feeding ground.
- You have killed many of them until now, haven't you?
- Yea, they would appear once every few years during winter.
- Can't you eliminate their main root?
- That would work If there were just a single group of them, you see. If we go hunt them deep in the forest, we will be surrounded and killed.
- Is that so?

Mike said 'killed' with a calm composure.

In other words, it would probably mean sustaining heavy injuries or people's death.

Eiji could understand his heart getting darker at that fact.

- They might come from behind, so don't lose your guard. If you get bitten by them or act clumsily, you will die.
- Y-yes. Is it fine for me to ask one question?
- What?
- I'm not opposed to surveying them, but what are the chances of

encountering them?

- You don't have to worry; we will take the right measures. We are going to use a sheep to lure them out.
- Will they take the bait with just one sheep?
- They won't overlook it even if it's a single prey separated from the herd.

Both of them reached Mike's house.

Jane was waiting in the cold weather, outside the house.

Next to her, there was a huge Siberian-type dog.

Understanding that Mike returned, the dog wagged its tail enthusiastically.

Once it ran near his side, it sprang at him, and after that, rubbed against Mike's leg.

- Alright alright, Gero, I'm back.
- It's a big dog, isn't it?
- Yeah, Gerodi is my partner. It's thanks to him spotting preys during the hunt that we can eat meals.
- wow wow!
- It seems to take a liking in you.

Gero thrust the damp tip of its nose at Eiji.

Its fur was fluffy felt and pleasant, which made Eiji understand that this dog was always neatly groomed.

While gently brushing Gero's head, Eiji put down the dog that was standing.

Despite having its head touched, Gero didn't hate it and even let Eiji stroke its head.

Indeed, it was a clever dog. What's more, it was obedient.

Nevertheless, once it spots its prey, this hunting dog will bravely run toward it more than anyone.

The dog had a slender shape without any useless fat and seemed like hiding springs inside of it.

- Well then, let's go sleep quickly; otherwise we will wake up late tomorrow.
- Got it. Just until a while ago I couldn't sleep, but suddenly I've been feeling drowsy.

- Good night.
- Good night.

Waving with his hand, Mike entered inside his house.
Next to him, Gero tagged along closely.

- Welcome back.
- I'm back, Tanya-san. Is our household fine?
- Yes. It's already late, so let's go sleep quickly.
- Yeah.

Together with Tanya, who was waiting outside, Eiji went inside.
As expected, his body was probably tired as this time he fell asleep immediately after entering the bed.

Chapter 37 – The Disturbance of A Fierce Battle

The next day after the meeting, Both Eiji and Pietro arrived at the workshop in order to make spear heads, even if it was just one.

Eiji decided not to make weapons for killing humans.

However, if it is to protect themselves against beasts, then it's a different story.

After that, he would come up with a way to prevent his tools from being used for fighting each other.

– Once the riot settles down, it should be fine to remodel them into something else.^[1]

– Master, did you say something?

– No, because we have no time today, I will use the water-powered hammer. Pietro, first concentrate on shaving and sharpening the tool's design.

– Understood.

Reshaping the tools will result in a decrease of iron; nevertheless, in order to compromise one's own belief with the reality, there was no other option for Eiji.

He concentrated his feelings on making the tool.

A big spear head probably wasn't necessary.

As long as it's hard enough to pierce through a wolf's skin and has the right sharpness, it would be better to make it light.

There were no soldiers that would normally practice in this village.

Therefore, the villagers might run out of breath if the blade is heavy and hard to operate.

Even if they had little experience, they probably had enough skills not to become a hindrance, however, it didn't seem like they could manage several beasts at the same time.

Furthermore, it takes time to make something huge.

Eiji deemed that it would be better to focus on producing numerous and high quality weapons.

From that moment, Eiji's job sped up.

In any case, the water-powered hammer was now processing to folding-back.

Hitting with a pressure that would be impossible with mere human's strength, the hammer stretched the iron steadily.

The speed was many times faster than the pace Pietro had when swing the big hammer.

Folding back, sticking together, stretching, and then folding back again.

Like that, it will create many layers, making a mild steel.

The hammer will create steel in the same manner and plate it with a another steel.^[3]

The work, in which one would normally produce 1 or 2 items using hands, could yield as many as 5 items thanks to the water-powered hammer.

The spear head, which was around 20 cm, was supposed to be used in short spears.

So as to make sure that the blade won't chip, it was made additionally thick and had its angle increased.

All of the spears had the same size and shape. It was a workmanship in which one wouldn't doubt whether they were made by a machine or not.

Still, there was one spear with an exceptionally long blade tip.

Eiji planned to have this one wielded by someone who could boast of his strength.

– Master too will go out for the hunt, right?

– Yeah. I don't know how much of use will I become, but...

– Please pay attention so as not to get injured. I... still need to have Master teach me.

– I'll be taking action by prioritizing my safety first, since I don't have much confidence.

Back in his school years, Eiji wouldn't be weak at sports, such as track-and-field running or ball games; nonetheless, he couldn't lump that together with a life-threatening activity.

Therefore, he didn't plan to force himself at all.

Accepting Pietro's consideration, Eiji promised to return safe and sound.

It was evening.

The sky in the western direction was dyed red and the weather gradually turned cold.

The whole area surrounding the tribal chief's house became a gathering spot.

– What are these things?

– They're used to protect your lower legs and arms. If you go just like that and get bitten, their fangs will pierce through your bones. If that were to happen, you'll lose heat and depart from this world.

What Eiji received from Mike's were leg and arm protectors.

Both of them were made from thick cattle skin and adjusted with a leather strap.

After he tried to hit it, a hard sound of tapping together with the skin's sensation returned.

Could this be...?

– Was it the tanning method which applies the tannin that you told us? It succeeded. The hardness feels nice, doesn't it? Hehe.

– You managed to succeed with only that much information?

– Yeah, still, it was bothersome, you see. There was a problem, as we could only soak the outer part of the skin once we submerged it inside the thick liquid. That's why I guessed that we need to increase the normal density so as to reach the state of having it soaked completely. You got it?

– That's incredible.

Eiji was completely in admiration for Mike, who rubbed his chin as if being proud.

Despite Eiji claiming that he had told 'only that much information', what he really conveyed was that there's a method called tanning, and that it requires lots of tree barks together with grass in order to apply the method.

To think that Mike discovered and establish a completely new

technique from that almost single piece of information.

- Mike-san
- What? Your eyes are glittering. It feels gross.
- You are quite a genius, ain't you?
- Oh?! This is the first time in my life that I was flattered.
- Actually forget it, you were mishearing.
- Don't say things like that!

Not being a scholar-like genius, a laborer can be some sort of a genius as well.

And rather than just a mere meaning from the word, Eiji could respect Mike in the context of being a creator.

- Well, that's fine. I'll properly engrave those words of yours in my head.
- You're too bashful. You really have never been praised, haven't you?
- Shut up. Think about how many heartbreaking moments I have gone through, like when I was still a young boy and told of having hunting skills, but having no brai-
- I'm done putting on the protective gear.
- Listen to me, will you?! At least hear what people want to say! Let me see... ain't they coming undone? Tie them properly; otherwise they will loosen up during the hours of walking.

As Mike helped with adjustments, the preparations were done.

Looking around, everyone was wearing the same leg and arm protectors, which gave an impression of them being quite heavily guarded.

Now that they were about to move toward the scene of fighting, the atmosphere was filled with enthusiasm and excitement.

Everyone was nervous and exchanged lots of conversations. They would repeat drinking water and going for a pee.

I too, feel like this. – Eiji thought.

However much he prioritized his safety, his heart wouldn't settle down.

His lips became dry and his heart beat was noisier than usual.

It seemed that Mike was composed, as expected of him.

Once Mike noticed any other person that was still unprepared, he would draw near and advise them.

– Alright, it seems that everyone is done with their preparations. We will soon depart.

– Yeah (everyone)

At Mike's command, everyone nodded and departed out from the tribal chief's house.

The vicinity was dim and the evening sun was about to sink.

In front of the house, there was a single big wheelbarrow, inside of which, wooden boards and large amounts of stones were gathered.

– These things, what do you plan to do with them?

– They're part of our secret plan for countermeasures against the wolves.

– You mean these wooden boards? How do you plan to use them?

– For an intellectual play, which I came up with. Don't fret and wait for the right time.

– Mike-san's intellect? I can sense something bad coming from that.

– Have more faith in me, will you?!

Having Mike leaning forward in front of him, Eiji calmed him down using his hands.

– He does. It could be that Eiji-san believes Mike-san to the extent of being fond of you.

– Eh? What's the meaning of that? Could it be that you were fond of me?

– I believe you. Well then, everyone, let's prepare to depart.

– Wai-Hey, answer me! Your attitude turned worse all of a sudden.

– You're getting nervous. Don't worry; there should be as little anxiety as there is in your conjugal relationship.^[2]

Eiji formed a line together with the other members.

Had he been no longer fond of Mike, he would have probably been long gone.

The relationship between these two was extremely favorable.

However, one could say that Eiji had little expectations for Mike's

intellect.

Inside the women's camp, there were a few that went out to see off the men.

They were the ones in charge of preparing a meal for their men once they return.

Those women, who primarily had no children and would be safe by just fastening doors and gathering, came to this place. One of them was Tanya.

– Tanya-san, you too please take care.

– I'll be together with the others. Eiji-san too, it will be bad if you get injured.

– I'll be fine. Still, I'm worried, so please give me a small kiss as a prayer for my safety.

– Ehh? But isn't everyone watching?

– It's for my safe return.

– T-that's embarrassing...!

Tanya quickly kissed him.

As soon as Eiji felt a bit of a soft sensation on his lips, Tanya distanced herself.

Eiji felt somehow lonely, but, with all the people's eyes fixed upon them, she managed to muster her courage.

One couldn't say it was extravagant.

Hearing the voices of cheering men, Tanya cast her eyes down while having a red face.

Similarly, other married couples kissed.

Because those who had children can't see their partners, they could only stare at that scene.

Hmph, go die. – Eiji had the feeling he could hear such voices.

Facing toward the departing men, Tanya waved her hand as long as she could.

Perhaps she was waving till their silhouette disappeared.

Tanya lost her previous husband because of war.

Indeed, Eiji could easily imagine Tanya becoming stressed from him being sent out for hunting.

Holding spears, shields, and torchlights, they advanced while changing their shifts in pushing the wheelbarrow from time to time.

The troops consisted of 3 vertical lines with Eiji being inside.

Mike was leading in front, whereas, Philip was supporting the back.

The hunting dog, Gero, was walking next to Mike.

It was probably trying to detect the wolves using its sharp sense of smell.

It would halt from time to time while changing their route a little.

The sound of clattering wheels echoed noisily.

At first, they were walking along the path from the village, but they soon strayed from it and moved toward the grazing land, on which sheep and goats would be raised.

Their footsteps gradually became unsteady and their view turned darker, making it impossible for them to look far.

– So you appeared, Fernando-san.

– Well then. Those guys have good noses, so I wonder how well it will proceed despite saying that we will use a sheep as decoy.

– If we do it recklessly, they might notice our ambush and try to assault us from different spots.

– Well, from what we've learned about their behavior, the wolves should probably act that way, still....

– That's worrisome, isn't it?

– It's worrisome indeed....

Making eye contact, the two of them nodded. Right now, it seemed as though they both could mutually understand each other.

Haa – Once Eiji sighed, he looked over the lines of troops again.

Originally, they planned to enclose 3 sheep inside the fence surrounding the grazing land and move the other sheep to a different fenced-in area.

The strategy was to lure the wolves inside and close the fence so as not to let them run away, at the same time, striking them completely from the circumference.

Was it due to the bad visibility and the considerably long distance they had walked? Everyone began to feel exhausted.

The villagers run their sight from right to left and continued to brace themselves so as to be able to response in case the wolves assault

them from the darkness.

The wolves are strong.

They tend to fight in groups while being deeply cautious.

On the other hand, humans are weak and get easily injured.

Even if the plan succeeds, risking one's life to surround the wolves is probably something a lunatic would do with a dying wish.

If that happens, they will certainly suffer damage.

And then, for people to gain a victory, sustaining an injury is out of question.

Were they to injure themselves even a little, there would be a fear of falling and dying from an illness.

The only way to avoid sacrifices was to win one-sidedly. However, that was a difficult task.

Suddenly, Gero stopped.

He growled toward the darkness, which was in the direction of leeward.^[4]

The darkness was deep, making it impossible for them to see through its interior.

Nevertheless, if one was told of something hiding there, then there would probably be something.

Straining their ears, it seemed as though a sound of a breathing wolf could be heard.

....Haa, haa, haa.

It was heard.

The men stopped moving for a moment.

Without any slight action, everyone's consciousness was glued toward one direction.

However, the sound of a rough breathing didn't come from just a single direction; they could be heard from everywhere.

....Haa! Haa! Haa!

Fernando prepared his shield while making a stern face.

The men who stood outside put up their torchlights so as to push out the darkness.

The dim silhouettes of wolves appeared from the darkness.

- Could this be....
- Yea, it seems that we are encircled.

Even if they were to succeed their plan by surrounding the wolves, they probably would still sustain injuries.

Then, what will happen once it's them being trapped inside—?

Someone muttered.

- This is the worst. There will be dead people.

Notes

1. talking to himself
2. He refers to Mike's and Jane's relationship suggesting they are on good terms, though I must admit it's a weird reference.
3. In the original text it the author used the same word twice (hagane – steel), but written differently.
4. Downwind from them.

Chapter 38 – The Sleepless Night

Hearing the breathing sounds from his surroundings while standing in front of the shining pupils visible despite the darkness, Eiji felt the anxiety inside his heart rising.

The men as well, probably had the same feeling.

Nobody wanted to get injured or die.

Even if they were wearing leather armors, the wolves' fangs were sharp, making it highly possible for them to fall into illness with a single bite.

There are lots of instances where people, who have neither war experience nor practice, will flee from the enemy in front of their eyes.

And yet, there are cases where the same people who are surrounded from all the sides are unable to escape.

Doing so would serve the same purpose as not letting any fugitive run away.

– Isn't this bad? What should we do?

– I, don't want to die.

– Calm down! Our plan won't change. Build the wall, just as we talked before.

The men concentrated their attention to Mike's voice.

From where it was dark, sounds of breathing and growls were heard from the direction of wolves that looked as though they were hiding from the torchlights.

Preparing his spear and shield, Mike shouted with a loud and echoing voice.

His throaty voice was reliable at times like this.

The men who were restless changed their attitude completely, realizing what they should do.

Just as they were told in the plan, the men gathered near the cart and took out wooden boards, which they used to lean against each other in a form of diamond around the troop.

The wooden board was longer than 1 meter and so thin that it could

be easily pierced through if the enemy got serious. Nevertheless, it didn't seem like the wolves were able to realize this.

Despite their formation, they didn't enclose their troop completely as they left opening parts, which were intended to create the right angle.

If they make it like that, they can limit spots from which they might be assaulted. It was also possible for them to calm down while thrusting with their spears.

The wolves raised their growls, which sounded threatening, however, it didn't seem that they would approach instantly.

– It seems that they won't attack us in the middle of preparation, doesn't it, Mike-san?

– That's because the wolves prefer chasing after their prey for a long time, rather than taking a brief offensive attitude. If we can restrain them properly, there's little chance for us to be assaulted straight away.

– You've done a thorough investigation.

– Naturally. I too have been dealing with them lots of times. Whether you like it or not, you have to study them.

Mike spurred Gero on so as to make the wolves contract and not let them come any closer.

The men nearby too, stuck out their spears to threaten the wolves. All the wooden boards from the cart were used and put into making a firm enclosure.

It was a height difficult for the wolves to jump over, and at the same time, not high enough to obstruct the people's view.

With that they could properly grasp the timing of their attacks and even conduct stone throwing.

– Is everyone done with their preparations? Then next, hold the stones. Match your breathing with your throw. Don't breakup. Match your aim.

At the detailed instruction, numerous stones flew.

Eiji too, carried under his arms many stones from the wheelbarrow and held aloft as he threw them.

The stones were quite heavy and the throwing felt weird, which wasn't like pitching in baseball, but more like something between

shot put and overhand throw.

He remembered that there used to be competitions in which he would throw the stones, or so it seems.

Even a stone that can hardly become a threat, while being thrown by a single person, can be turned into an aerial attack on more than a single target once more throwers are gathered.

Eiji threw a single stone, and then another.

The wolves moved swiftly left and right while avoiding the stones.

However, it was not possible for them to avoid completely.

Several of the wolves got hit directly, which made them clearly become sluggish.

– Philip, I'll entrust you with the other side.

– Yeah!

As soon as Eiji took a glimpse, Philip broke out from the wooden wall defense alone.

Will he be fine?

It seemed that his fear was a needless one.

Philip carried with him the one size bigger spear made by Eiji.

Once Philip was thought to revolve the heavy spear bewilderingly as if it was a baton, the next moment he struck using the spear's head.

His character stood out way too much.

Despite watching from a distant place, Eiji couldn't follow the spear's head with his eyes.

It seemed that the wolves' quick-witted and agile movements could be completely grasped by Philip.

Once a single wolf tried to jump in the air, the spear pierced through its middle forehead with the head of the spear probably reaching its brain.

The wolf's appearance fell powerlessly with a thud, showing its lost life.

Once Philip swung the spear, he would mow the wolves down confidently.

The wolves frequently raised their growls threateningly from Philip's surroundings. Nevertheless, they wouldn't jump at him recklessly.

It seemed as though his appearance resembled that of a hero from

a myth or of a great historical commander.

Such an appearance made Eiji agree that there was no reason for him to worry about Philip.

It worked.

As soon as everyone noticed the battle progressing toward their predominance, they felt alive for the first time. Their sense of suffocation disappeared.

Fernando, who stood next to Eiji, carried the stones from the cart.

- It's your portion. Keep throwing them steadily.
- So we had this many stones?
- What are you talking about? Wasn't it bothersome to deal with that large amount of stones back when we reclaimed that land?
- Ah! So it was that.

So the cart was fully packed with those?

Being surprised at the amount of stones lying on the ground that couldn't be seen clearly on the surface, Eiji sensed a strange relationship between stones and weapons.

Large amount of stones continued to disappear.

While throwing with all their might, their breath quickly turned irregular.

As soon as the number of thrown stones became sporadic, the wolves took advantage of the momentum with several of them charging at the villagers.

From the gaps made between the wooden boards, spears stuck out while matching the moment.

Operating with a spear isn't a difficult task even for an amateur as long that person is able to grasp the moment of the approaching entity and the right timing.

The spears certainly grasped the wolves' bodies.

Still, despite the sharp spear heads tearing through their skin and gouging out their flesh, the wolves wouldn't stop advancing.

- Wahh! It hurts!
- Are you fine?! Give him cover!

While being splashed with blood, a single wolf opened widely its jaw

and snapped at a man.

The wolf wouldn't open its jaw no matter what as it continued to bite obstinately.

The villagers thrust with their spears many times at it.

Together with the wolf's final death scream, its body fell down powerlessly.

However, its fang remained sticking into the man.

The other wolves growled with resentment after seeing their comrade dead. Nonetheless, they moved back a little bit while loosening up their enclosure, making their enemy's hit accuracy rate drop.

– We are short of stones, ain't we?

– Still, we managed to kill 3 of them and injured several others. If it goes smoothly, they will break up.

– But at this rate we won't be able to kill till the last one, will we?

– This isn't ordinary.

Isn't ordinary?

Eiji muttered inside his heart.

Saying 'this isn't ordinary' meant that there was an exception.

In the first place, being now surrounded was by itself not ordinary.

Good grief, his words doesn't make me feel at ease. – thought Eiji.

As a rustling sound was heard from the bushes, a big shadow drew near.

This one was more than just big.

Its physique made a large-breed dog like Gero look small.

Mike stared at the wolf boss with his loathsome eyes.

– It's huge, isn't it? I thought it was odd for the wolves' pack to be this numerous... but now the mystery has been solved. If there's such a monster-like leader among them, it is natural for others to follow.

Even the wolf's body seemed to reach their chest.

It would probably bite into a whole human's head, were it to open that big jaw.

– Fenrir.... – Feeling the overwhelming sense of intimidation, Eiji

muttered this word naturally.

Wolves usually appear in a pack of around 5 animals.

Because of that, the situation in which they were now surrounded would be considered unusual.

Perhaps it was due to the wolf, which Eiji called Fenrir, having strength and size exceeding a human's common knowledge that made it highly capable as a leader.

Therefore, it could lead a particularly big pack.

Fixing[notching] an arrow on his bow, Mike adjusted the aim while deeply focusing.

The string generated the sound of being tightly pulled.

Whoosh – the arrow flew sharply, piercing through the sky while making a swift sound.

Without waiting for the outcome, Mike pulled the bow's string again. It was a rapid firing.

The offensive attitude coming from the wolves turned much fiercer.

The boss of the wolves leapt side-to-side while avoiding arrows. Immediately after that, the wolf broke into a run.

Its speed was not inferior to that of a shot arrow.

Other people, who were confused, threw with stones; nonetheless, their aim wasn't good enough to pose a threat.

Even the stones, which hit accidentally due to the wolf's size, were repelled because of its thick fur.

It became clear that the Fenrir-like wolf was aiming straightly for Mike.

It was a confrontation of the bosses.

Depending on which boss was to be defeated, their respective side will probably lose motivation.

– Don't panic, we still have the wooden wall. Those holding spears, match your timing!

Despite himself being targeted, Mike kept his composure.

He too, switched to the spear and strengthened its spearhead together with the surrounding ones.

Even Eiji decided to hold his spear instead of using stones.

He didn't know what he ought to do in his first campaign; still, Eiji followed the instruction and decided to become a strength. This was the only thing he could do.

Lines of spears broke through from the gaps within the wooden wall. The people probably believed in being capable of bringing down the wolf thanks to having the experienced Mike with them.

In his voice there was no sign of impatience, despite him becoming the aim of the wolf.

– It's coming. Aim!

The Fenrir drew closer to the wooden wall.

It was a distance, in which the walls became a hindrance, making it impossible for them to throw stones.

The Fenrir bent back and forth, and then ran toward the gaps—
Once everyone thought so, the wolf leapt into the sky.

– Impossible! For it to jump over like that.

Depending on its huge body and unbelievable explosive power, the Fenrir leapt over the wooden wall.

Nobody was able to react instantly.

The Fenrir warped its jaw and exposed its fangs as if mocking its enemy's moment of disturbance.

As soon as it jumped again, the wolf pointed its fangs at Mike's neck.

— At that time, a white gust of wind ran past.

The wind passed under Eiji's arms with a vehement force and moved toward Mike's side only to snap into the Fenrir's neck.

– Gero!

The hunting dog, Gero, jumped at the Fenrir.

Thanks to him, Mike escaped his death; nevertheless, the conclusion was yet to be reached.

Gero and Fenrir laid on each other while changing their top and

bottom position in turns. Suppressing their opponent, they tried to bite at each other's neck.

Angry roars of the dog and the wolf reverberated.

Did the other wolves have faith in their boss? They didn't seem to go and help.

No one could give a support as both the animals were frequently switching places and wouldn't remain steady.

There was a risk of injuring Gero, were they to try to stab the wolf.

Mike and Eiji grasped their spears firmly, waiting for the right opportunity to help.

Their fight concluded.

Gero was restrained by the Fenrir. The white fur covering his neck became exposed and the wolf thrust its fangs in deeply.

A small scream was heard coming from Gero.

– Gero! You bastard, let him go!

It was the first time for Mike to raise his flustered voice in this turmoil.

Once an animal catches its opponent, it is much easier to aim at it.

Besides being only able to use its fangs for an assault, the animals could make use of their weight so as to slow their prey significantly.

They had to help.

Eiji subconsciously drew his spear.

The steel blade pierced through the Fenrir's skin and gouged out its flesh as it directly hit the wolf's shoulder and the base of its forefoot.

However, despite the wolf bleeding, it wouldn't release its jaw.

– I'll rescue you!

As soon as Mike drew his spear, he hit the wolf's base of the neck.

It was certainly a life-threatening wound he dealt.

Nevertheless, Gero still couldn't regain his movement's freedom.

Once a wolf snaps at its prey, it won't let its prey go as long it's alive even if it means death to the wolf itself.

However many times they stabbed it, the wolf wouldn't release its fangs.

The Fenrir died.

Did the surrounding wolves confirm their leader's death? They broke up and withdrew.

Perhaps, they won't approach Siena as long nothing major happens.

The battle concluded.

Some of the villagers dropped weapon, others lost power in legs, and yet another, shed tears from their eye corners.

Then, there was somebody coming to Gero's rescue with all his might.

– Gero, I'll save you! Don't die on me!

Kyuun – once a small cry was thought to be heard, Gero licked Mike's hand lightly.

– You still have to assist me with hunting from now on. It'll soon be spring and you will be eating lots of your favorite deer meat. You have to teach your newly-born puppies how to hunt. That's why... don't die!

Mike continued to talk.

Despite the dog's breathing becoming faint, it wouldn't cease licking Mike's hand.

– Damn, just how deep did the fangs sink? It won't come out.

– I'll help you. Let's use the spear as a lever.

Was the wolf's rigor mortis already present? Its fangs, which bit into Gero as if being its last act of tenacity, wouldn't come out.

As soon they managed to pull out the fangs with lots of hardships, the blood began to thickly flow out from neck.

There were many deep gashes inside of it.

Despite Eiji trying to stop the blood with a cloth, it was quickly dyed red.

Luckily, it seemed that the fangs didn't reach the dog's thick arteries and trachea.

The leather collar on Gero's neck also played its part in saving the dog from an instant death.

– While I block the blood, you go and order the retreat.

– Yeah, that's right. That's my duty.... I'll entrust you with Gero.

Mike showed a moment of hesitation at the idea of leaving the place, but he quickly stood up.

He told the men, who looked clumsily, to stand up, encouraged those with injuries, and ordered them to tidy up the wooden boards. Mike's appearance didn't give any sign of discomposure.

Indeed, he's a great person.

Eiji carried Gero under his arms and put him on top of the cart with the stones. On their way back, he neatly cleaned the place of wound from dirt using the water scooped from the river.

Once they arrived at the tribal chief's house, everyone broke up, leaving the tidying up for later.

Because the night was late, the discussion was postponed to the next day.

Mike, who finished his errands, rushed over to see Gero's condition.

– Is Gero fine?

– His breathing is getting weaker.

– Don't you know of any way to help him? There are probably various things you can come up with.

– I'm not well-acquainted with medical treatment. Sorry for that.

– No, you're a blacksmith, so it was wrong of me to ask you something out of your field.

– Please suppress the injury so that the blood doesn't flow out too much and gently wipe the wound using a disinfected cloth with hot water so as not to let the pus form.

– Got it. Thank you.

Is it fine to sew the wound? Or perhaps cauterize it? Eiji didn't even know how to perform that.

Assuming they resort to any of these treatments, Mike and the village doctor will probably be more familiar with that.

Eiji felt vexed at being unable to help.

The women's camp, who prepared meals, went outside one by one and awaited the return of their men.

Tanya too, searched while trying to detect Eiji's appearance.

– Hey Tanya-chan, this way!

– Mike-san, did the wolves' extermination go well?

- Yea, we killed their leader, so probably they won't come. Lookie, there's your husband.
- Eiji-san! Thank you for your hard work.
- I'm back.
- A-are you fine?!
- I'm sound. I didn't sustain any injury, but I just got tired from being over enthusiastic.
- Eiji-san, are you really ok?

Was it because his face looked much exhausted?

Eiji felt a bit anxious seeing how Tanya peeked at his face worrisomely.

It could probably have been due to Eiji not noticing himself being worked up that he looked worn out.

- Thank you, but there's nothing wrong with me.
- Your husband greatly flourished. He didn't step back despite facing a wolf in front of his eyes. Once he carried the spear, he shouted – 'Oorah'
- Such a thing, I didn't....
- Don't be modest. Speaking of which, Tanya-san, give this guy a light meal today and put him to sleep early.
- Understood.

It was painful for him to look at Mike, who was explaining to Tanya clearly and with all his might.

Perhaps, Eiji wanted to run away at that moment.

Were he to approach any closer, Mike would probably have to sustain his face, meaning it would cause him more trouble.

Eiji, who thought so, received a light meal from Tanya. Once he finished, they left the place.

The same night. Eiji immediately opened his eyes as soon he realized he was dozing off.

His nerves were still sensitive after leaving the risky battle behind.

Today, it didn't seem like he would fall into a sound sleep.
Once he stood up from his bed, a chilly air from the outside made his body tremble.
Placing properly the covers on Tanya, Eiji went out, as he felt a small urge to watch the night sky.

After putting a coat on and going out, the moon was shining above the sky.

And thanks to the snow that slightly piled up, the night was much brighter than in the summer.

Still, it was dark in the surroundings.

Just when Eiji recalled the battle scene, it was enough to make his spine muscles tremble and gush with fear.

– That is...

A dim light was leaking from the interior of Mike and Jane's house.
Seeing how they wouldn't spare their precious oil to light up the house, Eiji could guess that the condition of the hunting dog, Gero, probably wasn't getting any better.

The dog was a partner that Mike trusted and loved like his own child, and with whom he would go together on hunts.

Eiji remembered their moments of hunting together.

How Mike became flustered when Gero was bitten.

It should have been much more difficult on him than anybody else, and yet, he wouldn't whine nor make any complaint.

Mike continued to command the troop while remaining composed and dependable, to the extent that one wouldn't think it was normal.

Despite that, inside, his feelings and heart were probably in disorder and raging.

It couldn't be helped for him to keep worrying.

However, far from showing any flaws on his face, Mike even assumed the role of calming down Tanya.

Eiji could understand well why Mike, who was called a fool, would be considered dependable without being detested.

Indeed, he was a man of great magnitude.

And then, after tidying everything up, he still poured all his power into helping his dear partner.

In the end, Eiji couldn't predict whether or not Gero will be able to run around once again.

In the worst case, he will die tomorrow morning.

—Tonight seems to be a sleepless one. – He thought.

Knowing that it was inexcusable for him to go out after being told to rest, Eiji returned to the house with a quick pace.

Tanya's appearance, which fell sound asleep after learning of Eiji's safety, made him sigh with relief.

Chapter 39 – The Taste of Alcohol

With spring waiting around the corner, days of heavily piling up snow continued in Siena.

Here it was a common thing.

Once the snow ceased to fall and the morning sun rose from the eastern direction, the season would change from winter to spring.

Surrounded by the silence, in which even the wind didn't seem to be blowing, the villagers passed their days inside their houses, keeping a fire while waiting for spring to arrive.

Right now it was noon, and the inside of Eiji's house was warm.

The house was filled with the heat coming from both people and livestock. In addition, there was a stove radiating with heat.

As soon as Eiji picked two pieces of firewood, he threw them inside the flames.

Pachi pachi – sounds from the tree barks generated.

Even the newly added firewood that didn't ignite with the fire began to gradually burn red as a wind was delivered.

– Eiji-san

– Huh, is that for me?

– It's hot, so please be careful.

– Thank you.

Recently, they both had become able to understand each other's intentions somehow to the extent of feeling each other's respiration, or so one could say.

They could sense what each of them wanted even if it was done in a casual manner, making their mutual understanding even deeper than before.

That fact made Eiji feel pleasant.

What she handed to him was a steaming tea made from a linden tree's leaves.

Once he took the cup, he took down the iron implement which was hung over the fire.

The tool consisted of two iron kettles that were connected with a

narrow pipe.

In order to precisely eliminate their connection gaps, the mouth parts of the kettles were blocked with clay.

- Again, you’ve invented something new, haven’t you? Truly, Eiji-san can make almost everything.
- I wouldn’t exaggerate that, still...
- So today, what are you going to make?
- I’m condensing sake^[1].
- Sake?
- Yeah. We only have wines and ales here, right?

Inside the village, fermented ales and fruit wines, such as grape wines and cider, were generally drunk.

Naturally, their alcohol level wasn’t that high.

Well, for someone like me, who is bad at drinking, this much should be fine – Eiji thought.

For that reason, he couldn’t care less about beverages being not strong enough.

However, judging from Mike and Philip, who were strong with alcohol, they would have their stomach full with fluid rather than getting drunk.

- There’s also a beverage made from fermented goat’s milk.
- Seems like you have various alcohols.
- Since it’s not very strong, I wonder if Eiji-san will be fine with that. Won’t you try it out?
- I’ll take your offer once.
- Then, this time, I’ll ask grandmother for a favor.
- Please do so.

Just what kind of taste will it have? – Eiji couldn’t imagine that.

Will it have a taste similar to that of a cow’s milk? Or perhaps that of yogurt?

Freshly squeezed milk is smooth and stringent in taste, which gives it a deliciousness incomparable with those found in commercially sold products.

Nevertheless, because the milk doesn’t stay good for a long time, it

would be usually processed into yogurt and cheese.

For that reason, there was a chance that the beverage will have a nice taste.

On the other hand, it could also smell like a goat.

Pondering what the taste would likely be, Tanya pointed at the still while asking.

- Then, after all, what is this used for?
- It's a still.
- A s-ti-ll?
- You know that wine consist of alcohol and water mixed together, don't you?
- Yes
- With that being the case, once you put the wine over a fire, the alcohol will evaporate the quickest.
- Evaporate, what's that?
- When you continuously boil water, won't it disappear?
- Ah, I understand! You mean when the water becomes steam, it vanishes, right? The reason why your hands become moistened when put them into the steam is because the water's rising up, right?
- You figured it out pretty well.
- Ufufu... it's not a big deal.

Being able to answer the question, Tanya smiled pleasantly, which was kind of cute.

Eiji put his tea aside and gently brushed her head, making her enjoy that moment as she looked fondly at him.

- Using that method, we will be able to condense lots of alcohol.
- Still, once it evaporates, won't it disappear?
- You see, on cold winter days like today, the water droplets will usually stick to the ceiling.
- Erm... what do you mean?
- If you cool down the vaporized alcohol, it will turn back to a liquid. The cooled and liquefied alcohol inside the tube will pass through it and enter the opposite side of the iron kettle. With that, you can produce even stronger alcohol than just now.
- *Being in awe* Is that so? Then the condensed alcohol here is...

Tanya stared fixedly at the still.

It was a prototype model, so making it in large quantities was out of question, still, if it was for testing purposes which involved the application of its fundamental truth, then it would be more than enough.

If possible, Eiji wanted to make it using glass, as it would allow him to have a better view of the contents, however, there were no glass articles in this village.

Because the required melting temperature is higher than that of iron, unless Eiji makes a furnace with the right heat-resistant brick, no other furnace will resist the temperature.

Even casting bronze items requires such a temperature unlike iron ones, and therefore, are produced in scarce amount by city rulers, which makes them considered as precious to the extent of not wanting to sell.^[2]

- Won't you try the drink?
- But, isn't it still condensed?
- With just a single distillation there should still be enough water mixed inside, so it shouldn't be condensed that much.
- W-well, if it's just a little.

Eiji shifted the content from the still to an empty cup.

Despite putting it on the fire, the apple's fragrance wouldn't disappear.

No, rather than that, its mellow and bittersweet fragrance seemed to have become even more remarkable.

The hue had as well turned into a color similar to amber even though it was dim yellow a moment ago.

Tanya, who first feasted her eyes with the color, breathed in the alcohol's fragrance inside her chest.

- This one was distilled from cider. If I were to classify this alcohol, I would say it's a brandy type, although I'm not that knowledgeable...
- Ara... it's delicious. Indeed, the taste of the alcohol became condensed.
- If you want it to be even more delicious, you can ferment it inside a barrel.
- Eiji-san, despite you not being good at drinking, you're well-

acquainted with beverages, ain't you?

– Just because I get easily a drunk, it's not like I dislike drinking completely. Rather, there's something which makes me yearn for alcohol. ^[3]

Nodding with her head, Tanya tilted the cup.

Once she savored the taste inside her mouth, she gulped down the liquid.

– D-delicious.

– I'm glad you liked it. I wonder if the taste would become complete as soon it matures, you see.

Since his childhood, Eiji had been attracted by the appearance of a stylishly drinking actor whenever there was a scene from drama or movie involving bars.

Apart from that, he enjoyed staring at the shelves filled with alcohol bottles in bars.

The moment Eiji enrolled into the university and became an adult, his passion for beverages settled down a bit after witnessing other people going through painful experiences because of alcohol.

After all, there are not many who can hold one's liquor.....like in the movies and dramas.

Despite that, there were times when Eiji would think bitterly about him not being able to hold his liquor well.

– If you are not moderate with drinking, you're going to get drunk. Tanya-san too, isn't strong with alcohol.

– That's fine~

– Ah, you've already exceeded your drinking limit?!

Tanya's cup became almost empty.

Her reaction could be said to be as quick as a blink of an eye.

Tanya-san's voice turned high-pitch as her face flushed red.

Her breathing was out of rhythm, and her eyes became blurry, at the same time losing their strength while wandering.

.....It's getting hot inside.

– You're completely drunk, aren't you? Shouldn't you blame yourself?

- Listen, Eiji-san. I don't have any strength, so please help me remove my clothes.
- At least, please listen to what people want to say, won't you?

Despite Eiji complaining, his hands moved with excitement.

It seemed that on this island there were no such things as buttons.

During winter, most of people would restrain their rough clothes using belts in various places.

As soon as he loosened the belt between Tanya's chest and her waist, her lively appearance vanished in an instant and turned into a straightforward one.

– Yes, Tanya-san, please do hooray.

– Hooray.

She really just wants to be spoiled – Eiji thought.

Having her raise both her hands, he lifted up her skirt's hem and removed her clothes.

As Eiji stared at her, she responded back to him with an 'ehehe' laugh.

It seemed that whenever Tanya got drunk, she would laugh frequently with an attitude similar to that of a child.

Eiji wanted to complain, nevertheless, he couldn't possibly hate that image.

As soon he undressed Tanya, her black underwear became exposed.

They were a pair of bra and shorts which he made after taking numerous measurements by himself.

Unlike her simplistic clothes, both of them were arranged with lace, giving them a glamorous design.

Once she released her 'hooray' posture, her hands landed on the bed as she leant forward.

Her blurry eyes became upturned as if aiming for something.

Tanya's originally voluptuous chest was pressed forward, creating a visible cleavage.

Together with her rough breathing, her chest moved up and down.

Tanya's slightly sweating and flushing cheeks looked even more charming than usual.

Eiji, who would usually try to deal with things sincerely, made a sound of gulping down for the first time.

There was a clear intention in him trying to avert his eyes.

- You have a lewd expression.
- Sorry for that.
- It's wrong if you look at other people with those eyes, got it?

Even if someone was to make advances on him, Eiji wouldn't become loose.

Looking at her sobering face, Eiji made a firm plea inside his heart.

- Afuu... my head is spinning. It feels good....
- Hey, you better lie down.
- Are you going to sleep together with me?
- That's...
- I, it will be lonesome to sleep alone.

Tanya's eyes were upturned as it became tear-choked.

Their lips touched each other two, three times, so as to make sure they overlapped. After that, their tongues entwined.

The soft sensation of lips was felt together with their gums, and their upper jaws shivered giving them a pleasant feeling.

They continued to the extent of feeling out of breath.

Her kiss had a hint of apple to it.

Exchanging their lips, Eiji felt high throbbing inside his chest.

Was it because he felt drunk with just the kiss?

Being seduced openly like this, Eiji couldn't say 'no'.

It seemed as though their wish of having a child will come really quick.

They were locked inside a small house, which couldn't be said to be enjoyable.

Before the night arrived, the two of them placed each other's skin together.

Watching Tanya, who fell asleep while naked, Eiji made a wry smile.

Wouldn't it be normal for the man to wake up later? – He wondered. Usually it would, however, their roles seemed to have reversed after alcohol.

Rising up from the bed, Eiji soaked a cloth towel with the temperature-adjusted water from the stove.

Once he wiped his own and Tanya's body, he quickly wore his clothes.

Despite kindling a fire, the airtightness of their home wasn't high compared to the ones found in modern buildings.

As soon the wind blew through the gaps, their naked bodies would turn chilly.

After Eiji stoked the fire in the stove once again, he put some ciders in the still and began to distill.

The concentration level will increase little by little each time you repeat the distillation of the already distilled liquid.

The fragrance of cider rose in the air gradually, leaving the characteristic pungent and stimulating smell of the alcohol behind.

If a liquid is made from an already liquefied alcohol, then one can make it at most 5%. Nevertheless, if you preserve and seal it completely inside a jar, you can further raise the alcohol level.

It wasn't something needed yet, still, it might be necessary sometime in the future.

— A disinfectant alcohol.

– Gero

Eiji recalled the amiable siberian husky.

It seemed that it was named using the word 'Gerodi', meaning 'a hero'.

Indeed, that dog is this village savior.

Bravely facing his enemy, the dog rescued its owner.

However, Gero died.

Not even the dedicated nursing from Mike and Jane could be of any help.

Most likely, the increasing number of germs caused him to have a high fever, eventually, leading to the dog passing away.

Perhaps, his method of thinking wasn't likable.

Still, it was thanks to the incident that time that Eiji was able to come up with the still and the alcohol.

When you fail, you ought to capitalize the failure into your experience.

It was something Eiji learned through his work as a creator.

.....But, if only had he figured out the disinfectant property of the alcohol that time, would he have been able to save Gero? Eiji couldn't help but think that way.

Notes

1. The distilled alcohol mentioned in this text is made from cider. Obviously, as you know Sake is made from fermented rice and not from apples. The term Sake is quite unique, as it can generally be used to describe alcoholic beverages and not just the Sake which we know. I thought that replacing the word with 'alcohol' would sound strange, since it's not like the villagers doesn't know of the alcohol.
2. They are precious, but certainly it doesn't mean they can't be sold. Perhaps, each household would afford 1 tool or so, is my guess.
3. Of course his yearning for alcohol doesn't come from his addiction.

Chapter 40 – The Spring Budding

The snow stopped.

The sunlight poured in from the gaps between the clouds, and the surface which was covered with the snow slightly melted while radiating with the light.

A small quantity of green, tiny buds were sticking out from the spots that melted completely.

Inside the blowing wind, a certain warmth was felt. The birds traversed the sky while creating straight lines.

The winter had passed and it was the time for the spring arrival.

Stretching his back, Eiji went outside the house.

It was sort of a clear weather which one could hardly believe to happen after several days of heavy snow.

The air was still chilly; nevertheless, one could feel the warmth coming from the sun.

– Yaaaaaay! The long winter is over, it's now spring time! We don't have to seclude ourselves inside any longer.

– No matter how much time passes, you still behave like a child, don't you?

Mike, who was overflowing with vigor, jumped from the inside of his house.

After that, Jane made a wry smile; nevertheless, she quickly changed into a smiling face.

Spring was something that everyone had been expecting for.

The wind, the air, the light, and then the fresh leaves that were on display in front of their eyes, all of these made their hearts flutter.

– Mike-san seems to be full of spirit, isn't he?

– I was worried since he looked depressed for a while. I've never seen Mike being moody like that.

– Well, it's good to have him back.

– Indeed.

Eiji and Tanya nodded to one another.

His thoughts were still burdened with regrets of whether or not he could have rescued the dog.

Eiji felt as though his anxiety had lifted up now.

In front of his view, shadows of something jumping out followed Mike.

They were fast and small. Once they hid under the grass shadows, they became unnoticeable.

However, their silhouette reappeared, vanished, and then repeated the same action.

Facing toward the tiny shadows, Mike called out to them with a happy voice.

- Hey, follow me up guys!
- You, don't wander far away.
- Got it, wifey!

Those were puppies which weren't even a year old.

Eiji understood just by looking from the distance at their lovely color of fur that they were Siberian huskies.

The small puppies run desperately, trying to tag Mike. But because they were still too small, they couldn't catch up to him.

- These are Gero's breeds, ain't they?
- He probably intends to train them for hunting. Ah, Eiji-san please look, one of them run in this direction. It's small and cute.
- Such a small dog, to think that it will one day grow bigger than a human. Should you say it's strange, or perhaps amazing?

There were 4 of them in total, 3 of which were frantically following after Mike.

The remaining dog draw closer to this side with its quick and toddling steps without following Mike.

The small puppy displayed a face which was characteristic for it.

Tanya carried the small dog in her arms and rubbed it against her cheek.

- So cute!

Was it because it ran with all its effort? The puppy let Tanya do as she pleased while making its breathing sound rebound with 'haa

haa'.

Its rotund eyes were adorable.

Eiji thought about having Tanya embrace him later after she became content with the dog.

Mike approached this way, and together with him the 3 remaining dogs. He probably noticed the single puppy missing once he waited for its turn.

The puppies worked their small feet hectically while trying to catch up with Mike.

– Good morning. Spring has finally arrived, hasn't it?

– Long time no see.

– Yeah, so how did it feel being secluded for the first time during the winter? I bet it was tedious. Or perhaps, you were enjoying your newlywed life?

– Erm, no... I've had enough of being secluded inside the house.

Once Eiji answered deliberately and smoothly for the first question, Mike made a wry smile.

Were he to object and become sullen, Mike would enjoy himself. Therefore, it was best to go with the flow. Eiji understood that with time as he had become used to this place.

– As always, you're amazing, ain't you? Were you inventing something new again?

– I was just using some alcohol.

– A-alcohol? If you have any fine beverage, tell me.

– Well, I'm still working on it. Mike-san, how did you spend your time?

– I was doing nothing but playing Othello with Jane.

– Did you improve your skills a little bit?

– And how. Even if I were to make a bet at this moment, I'd win with no doubt.

– I won't help you if Bona-san hears of that and gets mad.

– Hey hey, I was just kidding.... Don't take it seriously.

– I got it.

At the time Mike and Eiji were chattering, the 3 puppies played with each other while writhing in the bushes.

It seemed that Tanya didn't intend to let the puppy, which she was carrying, go.

- Are those Gero's breed?
- That's right. I've got to quickly raise them into big dogs, so as to use them for hunting.
- As expected, they're cute when they're small.
- Is that so? Well, I'll admit that they're adorable; still, I think that the bigger guys look much cooler.
- Even though they're so cute. Eiji-san can we raise one of them?

Tanya thrust the puppy she was holding onto in front of Eiji's eyes. Kyuun – hearing the small puppy's weak cry, Eiji felt the urge of wanting to protect it.

The fluffy fur and the rotund eyes, despite it being the same Siberian husky, every of these dogs had a distinctive look. Its look was quite similar to a handsome man.

Still, there was no way for them to raise it in their household.

In addition to the cattle, pigs, and boars they had, their house was numerous in livestock, more than what they owned at the beginning.

- Don't we already have Button in our house?
- Oh, you mean that boar piglet?
- Isn't it a nice name? I came up with it.
- No, aren't you actually craving to eat it?
- Once his feelings transfer into something, he won't have the courage to eat it. Rather than leaving it nameless, it would be better to name it Button, or so Eiji-san said.
- Ain't you a changeable guy, Eiji? Whatever, let's gather today and resume the construction work of the barn.
- Understood. Hey Tanya-san, please return it back.
- Ah! My puppy!
- Don't say it's yours.

Eiji separated the puppy from Tanya, who was completely in a trance.

After licking her fingers, the dog followed Mike.

Despite Eiji trying to console the depressed Tanya, Eiji felt quite troubled.

– I want to raise a puppy as well!

Once the spring began, there were lots of things waiting to be done. Digging a trench from the river, mowing the weeds from the wheat fields, the works gradually piled up.

Therefore, it was necessary to finish the barn while spring was still early.

The men were sweating from their whole bodies just like a vapor.

As soon they roofed the barn with neat wooden planks, they blanketed the top with the western-style roofing tiles.

The male villagers, who didn't know how to lay the tiles, looked timidly at Eiji's and Fernando's way of doing at first. However, they gradually got used to it and continued their work quickly.

The brown roof made from the wooden planks was dyed a red and olive color, little by little, with the western-style tiles.

The labor, which began in the middle of the day, was interrupted with a lunch time break, and then carried out till evening. They continued to blanket the rooftop with the tiles.

The shed was big.

There are ones that are 40m long and 15m wide as well.

Standing in front of the barn, Fernando folded his arms while proudly staring at it.

– The barn is almost completed, isn't it?

– Yeah, didn't it take 4 months using the whole village? Quite a long time, isn't it?

– Well, it became a nice experience. In the end, everyone became familiar with the saw. It seems that starting from the next time, I'll be able to free up myself some and enjoy it a little bit more.

– No, wouldn't that make things more difficult?

– Naturally, there's no way for me to take care of everything. Even a single person can decide the course of the work. That's a huge difference.

Whenever it comes to building an extensive construction, a large amount of manual labor consisting of villagers is needed just like for this one.

Because of that, depending on each person's engineering skills, the

work will vary greatly.

- The next thing would be to show how to build the interior.
- No, I've done that before, so I already know.
- Including your knowledge, I want to confirm if there's any part that needs to be reinforced, or whether or not it goes accordingly to the plan.
- I see, in that case...

The massive door, which led to the inside, was probably made as a repellent against wild animals. Once they entered inside, a passage appeared.

The passage was interposed from both sides by numerous fences that divided the booths.

Because raising chickens caused the problem of their manure's smell, let alone raising them outside, the walls were furnished with lots of sliding doors so as to create ventilation.

The inside ground surface of a booth was covered with straw. Its role was to hold the smell and at the same time allow people to collect the manure for making compost.

Were the surface to be furnished with stones or concrete, it would make a chicken stressed, as it had the habit of kicking the ground and digging worms in order to release its stress burden.

For that reason, the bottom of the ground remained as soil.

Looking around the barn, Fernando took a glimpse of Eiji's face.

- Is there any problem?
- You haven't made any rectangular containers for storing water and fodder inside the booths yet, have you?
- Ah... oopsy daisy, I forgot about that. I'll do it straight away. Since I'll be focusing on that today, can I have you sort out which chickens go into which booth?
- Yes. It might be troublesome for you, but please do your best.
- It's my own fault, so I'll have to manage it somehow.

Scratching his head, Fernando made a wry smile and went outside with a trot.

Were it only a single booth, it would be fine, still, if it was concerning all of them, there would be lots of work to do.

Because of that, Eiji wondered whether or not there was anyone who could help him.

While going out by himself, Eiji pondered what the best way to sort out the chickens was.

Chapter 41 – Animal Husbandry and the Drinking Bout

At the time they decided to put each household's chickens into the barn, the negotiations ran into a trouble.

The idea proposed by Eiji was met with the villagers' support; nevertheless, there was still the problem of deciding to whom the egg, from which a chick hatches, would belong to. For Eiji, it was a considerable concern.

For the sake of making a contribution to the common property of the village, it would be best to have everyone hand them over.

After that, at first he would have the villagers consent by exchanging the chicks with lots of eggs.

Till now, everyone had been following with the objective without uttering any complaints, but now signs of disagreement were noticeable.

Eiji was troubled.

In other words, the proposal may have given the opposite result to what they would expect to gain in exchange for providing labor and resources.

When it comes to working, one will expect to be granted food without losing **anything**.

However, were he to offer them the chickens in times like this, the amount in their possession would reduce.

That's because the chickens, which can lay lots of eggs, were the most valuable.

During periods like this, where a shortage was a common thing, people would feel the anxiety of losing their property, more than anything else, is what Eiji concluded.

Right now, in every cage there were hens.

The hens shook their heads up and down while moving with short

steps.

If there were the ones that scratched the sand, then there were also those that drank water and pecked at fodder.

The total number of them was 32.

Inside there were only two roosters.

They selected 2 of the youngest roosters to form the groups together with the fertile hens.

For some 30 hens, 2 roosters were designated.

Again, you could call it a harem?

Letting them mate at their own convenience and making them lay eggs, once the chickens lose their fecundity, they would be made into meat.

It wasn't a kind of a complete freedom.

Well, isn't it still better than the other roosters which can't leave any offspring?

Saying that, it seems that even a harem has its own, big concerns.

Eiji went inside the cage.

The hens, which were familiar of human presence, walked slowly sidelong.

What Eiji aimed for was the newly laid egg.

He quickly took the egg which was placed casually inside the straw.

It was still warm.

– BRWUAA-AAWK!

– Ah, I was spotted. Crap!

The hen that tried to protect its eggs was unusually strong.

It was a force that would make even the animals, like dogs and cats, which would usually have no problems catching their prey, flee away.

– A-aww! It hurts! My bad!

As soon as the domestication inside the shed progresses, it will be possible to raise new chickens that won't be as fixated as now on their eggs.

Still, their self-awareness was unusually high right now.

Not allowing Eiji to pick its precious eggs, the Hen attacked him.

Eiji, who was severely poked by the hen's beak in his legs, could only withdraw.

As expected, once Eiji left, the hen wouldn't follow after him.

-.....*pant pant* it was a nasty experience.

His lower legs were stinging from pain and were probably red underneath.

Anyway, Eiji managed to get hold of the egg.

The next thing to do would be to think of a method to make it hatch artificially.

Once the egg obtains the right temperature, it will hatch.

The problem, however, was to find the suitable heat source.

– Because we don't have any copper wire, making a coil would be difficult. If so, we can only resort to primitive methods.

What Eiji could think of right now was to apply the heat coming from compost fermentation.

The heat will normally be generated once a large amount of chicken and cattle manure is mixed together with straw and dry leaves.

Since the heat is quite high, if applied directly to the egg, the egg white will probably change its consistence.

However, this was a proven method of making onsen eggs^[1] rather than chicks.

If the artificial hatching proves to be successful, it can be used for shortening the time needed to warm the eggs by the chickens, as well as to improve the spawning frequency.

In such case, it should be even possible for a chicken to lay more than 200 eggs yearly.

They would become able to eat eggs related dishes almost every day.

Omelette, rolled omelette, boiled eggs, scrambled eggs... Eiji's dream kept expanding.

Ah, using them to bake cakes should be fine as well – he thought.

Anyway, as long there are eggs, he will be able to bring a revolution of egg-related dishes,

growl growl – Eiji's stomach rumbled.

With the recent arrival of spring, it was still too early for crops. And one could hardly say that there was enough of the food in reserve to content oneself every day.

– Speaking of which, isn't fodder important as well?

There was no way for an egg to be made from nothing. A high concentration of nutrients was indispensable for the egg to be laid successfully.

Therefore, presently the simplest thing to do would be to add powdered egg shells and cattle's bones to the fodder.

Because Eiji's knowledge regarding animal husbandry was based on a second hand knowledge, it was necessary to test that knowledge using the method of trial and error.

How can one improve the production efficiency of chickens, using whatever is available in Siena? – he thought.

There was no problem in answering that question.

Also, it was necessary to decide who would be assigned the management role later on.

– Despite me having to focus on smithing, why did it become like this...? No no, it's for the sake of revolutionizing eggs....

Not wanting anyone to hear his cough, Eiji disappeared from the barn.

Night. All of the village executives gathered around the table, inside tribal chief's house, enjoying a drinking bout.

The inside of the house was overflowing with a cheerful mood, more than usual.

Loud voices echoed with laughs filling the room from time to time.

- My goodness! What's this? It's truly delicious, but as expected, alcohol is the best.
- Fernando-san, your personality changed too much.
- To think that it would be this amazing. What's this? Goodness me.
- ...Delicious.
- I've heard that you were making something, but Eiji, you should've told me sooner. Even though I can help you.... That's right; I can help you whenever it comes to food and drink related things.
- I don't need...

Without thinking ahead, Eiji spoke out his true thoughts.

This time the problem was regarding what they should do next to develop the village after the barn is finished.

What Eiji came up with was the idea of mass production using the watermill, and engaging the remaining people into making alcohol.

The distilled alcohol which he presented as a sample gained quite a recognition.

Philip drank as if licking the alcohol little by little while slightly curving his lips into a laughing manner.

Fernando was generally pleased with it. Just a while ago, he was laughing to the extent of breaking himself.

As for Mike, he seemed to have completely recovered from his grief. What everyone shared together was that nobody seemed to express any dissatisfaction concerning the distilled alcohol.

– How about using this alcohol for trading purpose as this village's special product? Rather than soap, I was thinking about having someone who's free to make the alcohol, but...

– Somebody who's free, you say? I think there might be someone like that, still...

– I wonder if something can be done about that, tribal chief. As for me, I'm highly in favor of such idea.

– Fer, ain't you just thinking about wanting to drink?

– Ah, as expected, you can understand that?

It seemed that Bona was captivated by the charm of the distilled alcohol as well.

Despite Bona pointing out the problem, her eyes were continuously

focusing on the liquid inside the mug.

Her sunburn skin, which was full of wrinkles, turned crimson red.

- So there's no-one for this job?
- Starting from this season, we will be needing lots of manpower. That's because we need them for sorting fields and making ditches.
- I guess it would seem so...

The field work was indeed a heavy labor.

Eiji could understand well how troublesome it is, since he was helping with field reclamation last year.

Perhaps a large workforce will be necessary this year as well.

It's also thanks to them putting lots of affection into their works, that they had been able to yield the fruit till now.

- You, rack your brains and help with decreasing the women's workload. Once you do so, there will be someone willing to help.
- When it comes to women's labor... it's cooking, weaving, thread spinning, and taking care of the household's livestock, isn't it?
- That's right. So about that, can you figure out something?
-By constructing another watermill, I want to have the work done fast even if's just for milling. After that, we can use the watermill for weaving, thread spinning and fulling as well.
- So in the end it's about whether or not there's a watermill? How long will it take make it?
- I wonder. It will depend on Fernando's pace.

Eiji and Bona took a glimpse at Fernando.

And then, they breathed out a sigh as if matching their timing.

- God, it's delicious. I too, want to drink nothing but this starting from tomorrow.
-Sorry, but can we talk about that together some other day?
- Understood...

Eiji jumped to a hasty conclusion thinking that he would receive some cooperation from the others once the barn was to be completed. Still, the future prospects seem to have become quite doubtful.

There were lots of things for Eiji to do.

He had yet to make the horse hoof, and if he considers the watermill to be their main source of power, it was all the more reason for him not to neglect his works.

The watermill's bearing and cog wheel parts also used iron.

Even Eiji's duties as the blacksmith would be considerably burdened.

– Understood. However, if I do so, I don't think I'll have any spare time to help with field work.

– It can't be helped. I'll leave you with this task.

Eiji won't be able to get involved with the field work.

Which means that he won't cultivate the soil nor see the completion of the reclaimed land.

That's a pity...

Eiji wanted to assist during the spring, as well as with the harvest.

He also thought about being part of the help for the festival of abundant crops during spring.....

Nevertheless, constructing a watermill was an urgent business.

However much he would regret, there was no way for him to exert himself beyond his limit.

Once a single watermill is finished, it will greatly reduce the amount of labor.

Providing he won't be making the watermill, the usual labor will continue to require much of workforce.

Eiji's mug shook slightly while creating some waves in the liquid.

– Eiji, what's the matter? Leave it to us. To begin with, you are a blacksmith, so it would be strange for you to be engaging in the field works.

– You bet, you bet.

– Giorgio-san, Bernard-san.

Both Giorgio and Bernard smiled brightly.

– I-if you need more wood, just tell me.

– Philip-san...

Leaning his mug, Philip gulped down the alcohol as he smiled.

– I'll take care of building the watermill.

Fernando words too, were gentle, unlike before, which seemed like an illusion.

Everyone was kind towards Eiji.

It wasn't necessary to shoulder everything by himself. That's why it was much more important to create something together as a whole village.

Eiji had forgotten about that.
However, now he was able to recall.

-...I feel like I can do it. Starting from tomorrow, I'll be helping in the women's camp.

Eiji smiled once again.

Notes

1. Also known as Onsen tamago. Here for more detail: [Wikipedia](#)

Chapter 42 – The Weaver

Once Eiji finished his morning breakfast, he went out together with Tanya to check the other women's labor.

Even if the cooking methods and the weaving were the same as the ones Eiji knew, understanding the technology standard from this era will make it far easier for Eiji to improve.

Just now, Philip's wife, Eve, was weaving.

Indeed she was a petite woman who didn't bear the slightest similarity with to Philip.

She was a head smaller than Tanya, who was already one head smaller than Eiji.

Because of that, whenever someone would talk with her face to face, there was a need to lower their head even lower.

To think that she has bore 3 children, indeed, that was surprising.

The youngest child could be said to be still tottering. It looked cute.

da da – the child raised its voice and clung to its mother's feet.

Will our child be raised in the same way? – Eiji wondered.

Eve welcomed the sudden visitors.

– Ara, is that Tanya-san and Tanya's husband, Eiji-san? If my work won't be bothering you, feel free to watch it.

– No, sorry for interrupting you.

– Somehow, having a man watch the work feels strange, you see.

As soon Eiji received a flirtatious glance mixed with a jest from Eve, Tanya's mood turned rapidly worst.

Because responding cheerfully to Eve would hurt Tanya's feeling, Eiji ended with just having the top of his hand pinched.

Being stared fixedly by her, Eiji thought – Even though I wasn't having any wicked feelings....

Eiji realized that this was the reverse side of the coin that represents his and Tanya's love.

The work was carried outside the house.

It seemed that weaving was only done on a sunny day.

And then, once Eiji witnessed the actual work, he couldn't express his surprise in words.

If one was to describe weaving, it was a labor where warp and weft crossed with each other producing a piece of cloth.

The women of Siena are used to hanging multiple strings of warp from on a single branch, and stretch the threads using weight stones that are attached with clay at the end of the threads.

Then pushing and pulling the strings one by one, they pass through between the gaps in the weft.

If it's used to make something small, that method will probably work.

However, once it comes to sewing clothes that require a large piece of cloth, dozens and hundreds threads passing through will be needed.

The workload becomes huge, making the weaving hardly progress.

A piece of cloth was considered precious, whereas, fur was used as a cheaper alternative.

Eiji could feel his face becoming naturally stiff.

– Eiji-san, what's the matter?

– No, I just felt a little bit of a culture shock.

– I don't particularly think there's something strange in it, but...

– It's not like I think of it as strange, still... it's extremely strange.

Eiji scratched off his head.

Back in his old days, Eiji would be told about different conventional methods by his parents. Therefore, he wouldn't brood more than that.

If one was to be told of them, it would be natural to consider that way.

Nevertheless, till now, Eiji had been doing all the works using his imagination and creativity.

Let's try solving this problem. – He thought.

Even among the women, there was nobody who would gladly do all sorts of jobs.

Since they were not able to come up with any idea to overcome obstacles, they had to do their jobs despite them being troublesome.

Using his own power, Eiji planned to create an environment for work, in which everyone would be pleased.

As such, his way of thinking hadn't changed til now.

Now that he had the technology and knowledge needed for advancement, there was no way for him not to use them.

Eiji felt as though he knew what kind of influence they will have.

– Is it fine with you? I'll try to make a miniature of what I plan to create from now on. Please lend me the threads.

– Y-yes

– Then, Eve-san, please lend me a comb.

– I'll bring the one from our house.

– Since we are still making the preparations, there's no need to rush.

After Eve left them behind, Eiji began to hang down some of the warp strings.

As long he explains the principle, there should be no need to place the strings horizontally.

– I've brought it.

– Thank you. Well then, shall I have you watch?

Eiji picked around ten warp threads and spread each one of them on the comb while entwining them.

Once he raised it up, he understood with a glimpse that there was still one thread remaining, which was not placed between the teeth of the comb.

– Eve-san, can I have you hook the threads on the remaining warps one to each?

– Like this?

– That's right. By the way, it should be fine if you catch these threads on a 'ko'^[1] shaped hook, or anything similar.

– I see.

– Well then, next please turn this thread toward the opposite direction of the comb. Let's go. First, I'll raise up this comb.

Half of the warp strings rose up. Watching from the sides, it looked as though they were crossing with each other.

At that time, Eiji passed through the weft strings.

– Fast...

– Then, Eve-san, please pull this thread.

– Y-Yes.

After the comb collapsed, the horizontally positioned warps were pulled using the thread Eve was holding onto, and created a reverse intersection.

At that moment, once again Eiji passed through the weft.

– Do you understand?

– I-I don't get it.

– How about Tanya-san?

– If you continue doing it like this, you will obtain a cloth, won't you?

– That's right. Actually, shall we continue this for little longer?

Eiji resumed the work.

Pulling the comb back, passing through the weft, once Eve pulled the thread, the warp was passed through again.

What they obtained was a fabric similar to the one they would get by putting in lots of time.

– H-how come...?

– Shall we continue for a bit longer?

– No, I get it. What I can't understand is why I haven't notice this before, I wonder.

Eve's shoulders trembled.

Casting her eyes down, she covered her face.

No... could it be...?

Eiji's sight met with Tanya's. Her face was still dyed with disbelief.

– *Hic hic* *Hic Hic*

Could it be that she's crying?

What should we do?

Despite Eiji turning his face toward Tanya, all she did was shake her head side to side.

– Eve-san... I'm sorry. It seems that I've caused you trouble.

– I apologize for my husband's rudeness.

– *Hic hic*..... this is.....amazing! Eiji-san, are you a genius?! You've gotta be a genius, right!?

– Y-Yes? N-no, that's wrong?

Eve, who suddenly lifted her face, had a smile despite her eyes being red.

No, rather, it would be fine to say her expression was brimming with joy and her eyes were shining with curiosity.

– I'll help as well! After all, this is just a demonstration, isn't it? I can probably guess that the real thing will be amazing. Once the prototype is completed, we will be able mass producing completed goods from now on. Waaahh, when I think about this becoming reality, I....!

Eve, who was thought to be talking vigorously, embraced her body while trembling.

Seeing that sudden change in her, Eiji and Tanya could do nothing but feel puzzled.

She was staring at the weaver with a beaming face. Her eyes were filled with enthusiasm.

Speaking of which, this person is a bit scary – Eiji thought.

Perhaps it is a suitable view for someone who have just witnessed a technology advancement.

What's more, if that person can notice the great value of the product, won't that person strive to improve it further?

Eiji shrunk his body without realizing it.

He could feel his face becoming stiff.

Trying to calm himself down, Eiji coughed once. He put a smile forcibly on his face while hiding his stiffness.

- A-Anyway, you're saying that you will cooperate with us, right?
- Yes! Allow me to help you with gathering the materials for the prototype as well.
- I-I too will help you!
- Tanya-san too?
- Is there any problem...?
- N-No, please do so.

Why is she staring at me like that? – thought Eiji.

Despite being surprised at the sudden outcome, it seemed that Eiji had a rough idea for the development of the weaver.

- So, you came to me because you wanted to borrow some tools?
- That's right; please lend me your tools.
- Well, if it's Eiji-kun, you will know exactly how to operate them, so it should be fine, but....

Fernando took a glimpse behind Eiji's back.
His expression turned a little bit dumbfounded.

- Why did you bring Tanya-san and Eve-san along? I don't get it.
- I want to see the completion of the weaver even if it's just a bit!
- Aiding the husband is the wife's job... that's right, the wife's job!

I too, don't get it – he thought.

Eiji wanted to reply that way, still, he would probably make her mood turn worse.

An ambiguous smile surfaced on his face.

Did that convinced Fernando? He guided them to the storage location of his carpentry tools.

A plane, chalk line, saw, sledgehammer, bar, chisel, fasteners, and screws, lots of miscellaneous tools were stored.

Picking the necessary tools one by one, Eiji put them into his box.

- Well then, I'll borrow these.
- No problem, but if you ever consider to make them by yourself, I'll help you even if it's just a little. So, what are you making this time?
- Is it fine by you? I'm thinking of improving the weaver. Here's the

blueprint.

– As always, you draw some nice pictures, don't you?

What was drawn on the blueprint was a petal-shaped horizontal weaver.

The advantage which made it different from the perpendicular built weaver was the possibility of weaving broad cloths.

The pedal would make it act just like a seesaw. If you move it to the right, every other string would lower, and reversely, those same strings would rise when the pedal was moved to the left.

In front of the pedal, each of the threads was stretched just like in a piano. Each time the pedal is moved left and right, the threads will move up and down, creating gaps for the weft to pass through .

The weaver's design and its small size were settled and ready to be built.

– Well then, let's measure the materials as the blueprint indicates.

– I can use the saw, so I'll cut out the wooden materials.

– Since I am able to operate with the chisel and the plane just like Fernando does, leave it to me.

– Erm... w-well, then I... will... eh?

– Tanya-san, use the file to shave the materials that are cut out and form the shape.

– I-I'll do my best.

However, the difficulty was yet to arise.

Setting the right thickness of the trench that will fix the warp, creating holes that will allow each of the conjoining parts to operate; these procedures could only be done by Eiji and Fernando, who were used to making tools with their skillful fingers.

So to speak, the works which take most of time are the ones that are short of people.

What's more, the end product might not work in accordance with one's expectations at first.

– Again, it's no good?

– The field for the pedal to operate is too big. Let's insert a thin plank near the bottom so as to minimize its scope.

- Can I entrust you with that?
- Eve, can you do it?
- I have to cut it thinly, right? Leave it to me!

Holding the chisel, Eiji inserted a thin trench.

It was done so as to shape the connecting parts of the joints and to improve the sliding.

While blowing away the wood chips, Eiji put many details in by hitting the chisel with the wooden hammer.

Repeating the method of trial and error, the weaver was still misshapen. Nevertheless, its accuracy gradually increased.

It took a lot of time.

From the morning till dusk, they repeated their work 3 times.

Even when Eiji slept and woke up, he would pay his undivided attention to the weaver.

Once he focused on something, he wouldn't think of anything else.

And then—

- We, We did it....
- *impressed* good job. Well, now that the item is completed, we can enjoy the mass production.
- This is the weaver..... U, ufufu, now my dream will come true!
- I'm tired... Eiji-san, were you this exhausted when making the senbagoki?
- No, that one was fundamentally easy to make. It didn't consume as much time as this one.

The horizontal large-sized weaver was completed.

Its width was 1m. As for the first model it was a rather non-standard one.

With its gliding surface in touch made from a gentle application of plane, it was a workmanship worthy of an object of art

Eve gently brushed the finished weaver as if loving it.

The others beside Eve were exhausted.

Together with its completion, they sank down to the floor powerlessly.

- With this I can weave inside the house, so I can do my job even on

rainy days, right?

– That's right. Well, besides doing just the weaving, you can also twist some threads, still...

– Leave the production to me. As long we have this tool, we should be able to speed up the work many folds of times by assigning 2-3 people for weaving and the rest of the members for thread twisting....

– I probably should gather free people for the watermill construction.

– Aah, I want to help with that as well!

– I don't particularly mind if these are people who can do the weaving, but...

–I'll do my best and focus on the production....

Eiji encouraged Eve, who dropped her shoulders dejectedly, by telling her that there will be many other chances to build a watermill from now on. At the same time, they transported the weaver to her house.

Going their separate ways, they left Philip's household behind.

– Finally, it's over, isn't it, Eiji-kun?

– Sorry for having you help me.

– No no, I don't mind at all. Still, if you want to thank me, then perhaps you'd be willing to share some of that alcohol with me.

– Hahaha, understood. You can come tomorrow and choose at your own discretion.

– I did it!

Parting with Fernando, who was jumping for joy, Eiji was on his way back to his house.

Tanya too was tired. Her face seemed to have lost its vividness.

– Are you fine?

– Yes, to think that Eiji-san would go through that every time.

– There were also times when I would entrust other people with tasks. Only in this occasion was it this tiresome.

– Indeed, Eiji-san is an amazing person. Please continue to do your best from now on. I too, will do what I can.

– It's because I know Tanya-san is supporting me that I can give my best.

However exhausted he was, as long Tanya graces him with a smile and welcomes him, he will do his best.

Eiji wondered whether he would be able to continue making different things, were he to be showed a single act of displeasure or disagreement.

Were he to settle only his own business silently, the situation would be much different from what it is now.

On the evening return trip, the two of them held their hands while walking back.

Inside the cold atmosphere of the newly arrived spring, Eiji could feel the warmth coming from their hands.

Notes

1. 'ko' like the 'コ' symbol in katakana.

Chapter 43 – The Watermill (first part)

Morning. As soon as Eiji woke up, Tanya's appearance was nowhere to be seen.

Eiji placed his hand on his left shoulder.

Unlike before, Eiji felt somewhat chilly when waking up all by himself.

Just where did she go?

Eiji looked around the room.

Next to the bed, there was a big chest where they would store precious things.

In the corner of the room, stacks of wheat alongside the senbakoki were piling up. They were part of Tanya's work.

Not being able to spot her, Eiji once again couldn't sense anything.

A single wall in the room separated part of the house for the purpose of making a livestock cabin.

Looking at that direction as well, there was a cattle staring at the wall and swinging with its tail.

Puhi puhu – As soon as the boar piglet, Button, caught the sight of Eiji, it drew closer to him while making a sound with its nose.

Since Button was quite clever, they let him run free, as the little boar would return back.

Did the piglet want to have its food? Or perhaps he just wanted to come into contact with him?

Eiji brushed the piglet's head gently.

So as to prevent fleas and mite from appearing, Tanya would always use a fine comb to brush her hair. Because of that, her hair became surprisingly soft and sensitive.

– Don't you know where Tanya-san is?

– Puhi?

- Well, it's not like you will know.
- Puhi! Puhi!
- What's the matter?

After Button had shaken his head sideways, he pointed his nose toward the entrance.

Eiji had the feeling as if the boar piglet wanted to tell him that Tanya was there.

No, it shouldn't be possible. There was no way for for the piglet to understand my words.

Despite thinking so, Eiji felt like he couldn't ignore that fact and went outside.

For some reason the little boar seemed to be serious.
Button tagged him along.

The first thing for the women to do in the morning was gathering some firewood and scooping water.

Scooping water into a bucket and preparing a meal were both a woman's job.

During this time, the men would socialize with each in their backyard fields.

The piglet boar walked in front. Button moved while sniffing with his nose, changing the direction every time he made a 'puhi' sound.
What appeared in front of them was Mike's house.

- You really think that she's there?
- Puhi! Puhi Puhi!

Well, I've go nothing to lose. – he thought.

A boar's nose was unusually sensitive.

Eiji remembered stories where a pig would be used to search for truffles.

Not only were Eiji and Mike next-door neighbors but their houses were also connected by a straight line path.

Right next to it, there was a path of thickly growing with grass where

only signs of humans treading on it were seen.

In comparison to Eiji's house, Mike's was a little bit bigger and older. Its wooden walls had more gaps sticking out than in Eiji's house which had been repaired, and probably required repapering.

– Good morning, it's Eiji. I apologize for intruding in the early morning.

Knocking on the door, Eiji waited for a reply.

For the villagers it was considered normal to enter without permission, but Eiji, who had been brought up under different customs, couldn't do so.

Even visiting in the early morning made him feel somewhat guilty.

As soon as the door opened with a creaking sound, Mike's sleepy face stuck out.

His eyes didn't seem to be fully awake.

– ...Oh, is it Eiji-san? Tanya-chan came here a while ago.

– Good morning, So Tanya-san was here?

– Yeah, she arrived even before the sun rose and has been discussing with Jane since then. Fuah, so sleepy.

– I'm sorry for that.

– Oh, it's fine. I wonder what they have been discussing about.

As usually, Mike was easy-going toward Tanya.

He probably thought of her as his sister.

Recently, Mike came to accept Eiji as her husband, still, is he always that unfriendly toward men whom he has never seen before?

Enter – Once Eiji was urged, he passed through the door.

The smell of wild animals and wood floated in the air.

Probably, they had been continuously tanning leather.

Inside the house, Jane and Tanya were talking to each other.

Listening diligently to Jane's words, Tanya nodded frequently.

After Jane had noticed Eiji's appearance, she poked lightly at Tanya's direction.

– Hey, didn't I tell you? Cheer up.

– B-But.

– No buts.

Jane smiled with a grin.

Just what did she tell Tanya?

As soon as Tanya stood up, she moved in front of his eyes.

Was she embarrassed? Her eyes wandered without settling down.

Tanya poked her fingertips together as her cheeks blushed. She couldn't bring herself to say after many attempts.

– E-Eiji-san!

– Y-Yes?!

Having a raised voice directed at him, Eiji became surprised.

Just what on earth happened?

– You see, that's, please listen to me calmly.

– Ah, yes. I'm fine; rather it should be Tanya-san to calm down.

– You're right. You see, actually, I am.....

– Yes?

– It seems that I'm pregnant.

– So it was that? I'm glad that you're safe.

Is that so? Is that so? So, while I was worrying about her falling into any illness she was just pregnant? – he thought.

Since she hadn't been eating a lot recently, Eiji thought about whether or not she was on a diet or something.

-.....Pregnant?!

– Yes....When I talked to Jane-san, there was no doubt about that.

– Is that, so? Is your body fine?

– Right now I'm fine. Sometimes, I feel unwell, but...

– Don't force yourself. Later, please talk to me if there's anything bothering you. That's right; I have to make the disinfectant alcohol and distilled water. What's more, I've got to sterilize the room by boiling, and make it clean. I've got to separate the livestock hut and clean the feces, and the baby's first bath! I need to make a bucket for the baby's first bath. There's so many to do—!

– Eiji-san, there's still plenty of time till its birth, so please calm down.

– T-that’s right. No, I’ll become the father. Should we give it a name, I wonder?

He didn’t seem to be calmed down at all.

Despite them deciding to have a child, the fact that Eiji became the father didn’t reach him until he actually learned of that.

No, even now it probably still hadn’t reached him.

Still, inside his heart, there was something hot gushing out.

Tanya looked even lovelier than usual.

I’ll protect her at all cost, no matter what obstacles await us – he thought.

Even if it was to make their life just a little bit easier, they couldn’t neglect the development of the village.

And then, they probably had to focus on improving their relationship with the landlords.

Providing they are continuously exploited like this, a war will break out sooner or later due to their dissatisfaction.

However, more importantly...

– Tanya-san, thank you. Let’s do our best and give the birth to a healthy child.

– Yes, I’ll do my best!

– Erm, since it’s my house, won’t you go back and do that in your home?

Eiji embraced Tanya vigorously, and then gently.

With their love for each other welling up, they exchanged a kiss.

Having a dejected face, Mike murmured a complaint discretely.

Later, Eiji would have Tanya abstain from doing works that required physical strength as much as possible. He decided to have her stay at home and do the chores.

This was a time period where even doing field-related works could not be avoided by pregnant women.

Eiji couldn't completely prevent her from doing physical labor; nevertheless, he wanted to use the utmost of his consideration.

Luckily, threshing was a job where one could do it in a sitting position.

As for water scooping, Eiji thought of improving the wheelbarrow so as to make the transportation easier.

On the other hand, he intended to let Tanya continue cooking as much as she could, otherwise, his job wouldn't advance as well.

Right now, Eiji arrived at the riverbank together with Fernando, Thomas, Philip, and the women who had free time.

Since the construction of the watermill was decided, it was the first day of carrying out the plan.

Today, it was about making a preview and explanation.

The river was 5m in width and some 70cm deep.

The stream wasn't particularly fast, and the water was unusually clear, to the extent of being able to see the bottom of the river without any obstruction.

The sound of the river echoed without any pause.

Eiji thrust his hand through the river's surface.

It was considerably cool.

The chill will probably become a hindrance once they start their works.

Near the riverbank, big stones were scattered all over the place. In order to carry out the plan, first, they had to get rid of them.

Picking up a single stone, Eiji threw it properly into the river.

Plop – the stone sunk together with a low sound.

As he moved further, he threw another one the same distance.

The stones were heavy, but not impossible to be lifted.

In case an object was excessively big, they could probably use a wooden stick as a lever to move it.

Once Eiji reconfirmed the actual site of the work, he stood up.

Eiji clapped with his hands toward the present people, who were chatting with each other, so as to bring their attention.

– Ok, I'll now assign you to a post. Those who are called out please forward.

The women followed his instruction.

What he showed in front of them were stones in different sizes.

– Right now, at the bottom of the river, there's a big stone which I've just thrown into it. We will transport and put the stones from here to there, and shape a wall. I'll have you create an L-shaped wall, but please do it so that the water doesn't come in. It's fine even if you can't block the water completely. Do it slowly and without rush in order not to hurt yourself.

The first step of the project was to build the foundation.

Eiji planned to have the women's camp move the stones from the riverbank, and at the same time, use them to dam up the water that is responsible for driving the watermill by being received in the place installed with a water wheel.

After that, they had to dig the part of the river bottom that has become dry, and adjust the height of the spot which receives the water from the wheel.

Depending on the installation height of the water wheel, the watermill can be classified into: top-level type, middle-level type, waist-level type, and bottom-level type.

The higher the spot is, the more power the watermill can generate, thanks to the force and the mass of water it can receive.

Considering the depth of the river, waist-level type would be the most suitable one.

It was meant to be built during this work.

Later, in order to create the pedestal part of the bearing, they had to level and strengthen the ground surface.

Since the women in this village won't bow out to the men when it comes to physical labor, they should be able to do enough of the

work, providing they aren't rushed.

After receiving their orders, the women's camp quickly started to move.

Even during the work, they wouldn't cease talking to each other.

But despite their idle chatting, the work was progressing favorably.

plunk plunk – the sound of stones being thrown inside of the water kept repeating.

– Hey, Eiji-kun

– What, Fernando-san?

– From now on, you plan to make many of these watermills, right?

– Yeah, I want to build at least 5 of them.

– Got it. Well then, I'll go prepare more materials in order to make the watermills.

– Ah, about that, please wait a moment.

– Hm? What's the matter?

– Depending on the amount of water and the stream's speed, I need to adjust the water wheels' size. That's why we should not make multiple watermills at the same time.

– Then, you plan to repeat the same procedure each time?

– Because we have to create same components, like bearings and cog wheels, how about mass producing them?

Since the basic structure of the watermill is similar to the one in Eiji's workshop, Fernando was able to grasp the concept back when he helped with building the workshop.

That watermill, however, is a bit more simplistic in terms of structure, which makes the labor efficiency less desirable; nevertheless, they still had to put a considerable amount of effort into it.

This time, reflecting on his previous experience, Fernando also showed the desire to construct an even more efficient thing than before.

– Eiji-kun, are you possibly going to produce the bearings with the iron apart from giving instructions?

– Yeah, there's no way for me to leave everything on other people's shoulders.

– I'm looking forward to the construction. Ah, by the way...

– What?

Seeing Fernando, whose expression became serious, Eiji tightened his face.

- I'll definitely make better items than ever before.
- I've high expectations in you.
- Naturally. Who do you think I am? I'm the man who's in charge of processing every single piece of lumber in this village? Hey, Mark, how long do you plan to help with those stones?! Your job is this way.

This village was in the middle of changing.

The barn was completed, the fields were expanded, and now, the watermills were being built.

Once the watermills are done, tasks that involves crushing hemp and wheat straw, as well as knocking the skin in tanning, will be performed thanks to the power generated from the watermills.

A part of the living necessities will probably contribute into the increase of savings. What's more, there will be productivity power to spare that can be used for reclamation and further development.

And then, there will be more time for private affairs and making children.

Feeling that everything is going into a favorable direction, Eiji couldn't help but sense the gushing spirit from the inside of his body.

After he left all the instructions behind, Eiji rushed over to his workplace while being filled with enthusiasm.

Chapter 44 – The Watermill (latter part)

Squeak squak – As the sound was generated, the saw moved forth and back with the wood chips flying around.

The 2 cm thick wooden plank was slowly but surely being formed.

Inside Fernando's workshop, characteristic noises of a saw, plane, and chisel wouldn't cease.

The song created from the combination of wood and carpentry tools was somewhat stimulating and gave a pleasant feeling.

It seemed that the work was progressing favorably.

Countless of articles were leaning against the wall and numbered using a coal.

The total number of them exceeded more than a hundred.

That's an amazing number – he thought.

What's more, the workmanship was done splendidly.

Every single piece of raw wood played its function.

However, it wasn't just cutting them. The work was performed with great consideration for the wood's grain so as to make the fullest of its quality.

While progressing steadily with the saw, Fernando took a glimpse at Eiji.

His look was sharp as if piercing through, and seemed to make one falter.

- That's why, it's not possible to make it that exact.
- Even if it seems unattainable, please do your best.
- Eiji-kun, do you realize how unreasonable your words are?
- Please add small adjustments so as to make it a little bit larger.

Hearing Eiji's statement, Fernando scratched his head.

From his bitter face, you could tell how troublesome this order was.

Sorry for that – Eiji thought, but at the same time he didn't plan to

give up.

Finally, even Eiji yielded as he breathed out a sigh.

There was one thing Eiji desired.

That was to make the water wheel's measurement as balanced as possible.

However, drawing a perfect water wheel without irregularities required some time.

That's why they decided to make the framework of its diameter ahead of time.

And then, cut out a balanced water receiving part of the watermill and insert it from the outside.

By doing so, it won't be possible for them to strictly control the size of the diameter, but in exchange, they will be able to create a balanced width.

– To begin with, shouldn't it be alright for that big thing to just revolve?

– At the very least I want to make it more efficient and reduce any futility, as much as possible.

– As for efficiency, I don't think it will change that much.

– It will, I'm telling you.

– You're quite self-confident, ain't you?

Depending on the size, there will be irregularities in the rotation speed.

Even if it's a small irregularity, it will certainly influence its proper working.

Possessing the sense of a modern Japanese, Eiji requested the work to be detailed.

In other words, it was about high accuracy.

– Still, despite you saying so——

– Answering to the duty is a laborer's thing to do.

– You believe so?

– That's right. After all, making items is part of human nature, right?

– It's just like the cause and effect of a trade. That's why I want to do it even if it's unreasonable.

– As you wish.

At Fernando, who was grinning, Eiji clenched his fist.

Gon – Their fists smashed together.

During time like this, Eiji was glad that they could understand each other's intentions as fellow workers despite the difference in status.

Therefore, Eiji didn't have to worry about the quality of work.

Rather than that, he was more concerned about the challenges that will await him next.

The sound of the watermill echoed.

It was heavy and could be felt reverberating inside your stomach.

Eiji's workshop was noisy. Different sounds were heard on a daily basis.

The sound of a pair of bellows, the sound of bursting flame, the sound of the watermill's cog wheels biting each other, and the sound of a knocking hammer.

These sounds would naturally improve the mutual understanding between blacksmiths apart from using words.

It was also natural for them to raise their voices.

Using the water-powered hammer, Eiji heated up the iron plate while striking and folding it. Next to him, Pietro raised his voice.

– Master, the arrowheads are completed. Won't you check them?

– Understood. Wait a moment.

Eiji lightly raised and bent the edge of the thin and stretched iron plate with the fire tongs.

While visualizing the first ever watermill bearing to be made, Eiji changed the iron plate's surface.

He adjusted the amount of carbon and bent the plate while paying attention not to break it.

The crimson burned and scorching iron curved flexibly.

Right – Eiji muttered inside his thoughts as he pulled the chain suspending from the ceiling.

As soon as the mechanism was disconnected, the water-powered hammer stopped slowly leaving the surplus of power.

The sound lowered and became silent.

– Well then, shall I take a look?

– Yes, please. This time I made around 20 new arrowheads.

Eiji checked the placed arrowheads one by one.

Since the beginning of the new year, he had taught Pietro more about smithing little by little.

Making arrowheads doesn't require much iron and are easy to redo.

Eiji confirmed the sharpness of their blades as if scrutinizing them.

I wonder if they could be called just so-so – such was the impression he had.

Pietro had been improving himself well for a single year.

Were it the time for reckoning him, Pietro would probably obtain a passing mark.

However, it was just a bare pass. In order to become a full-fledged blacksmith it was still not enough.

The grading criteria seemed to be harsh; nevertheless, with only this much Pietro wouldn't be able to make profits yet.

– Pietro, can you judge which ones are still bad by yourself?

– Please wait. I think this... and this.

– This one, this one, and this one....

Pietro pointed out 2 of them as if becoming slowly confused.

On the other hand, Eiji, who was definite, could show as many as 8 of them.

Each time the bad ones were pointed out, Pietro's expression turned sad.

I wonder whether I'm not too harsh on him. But, so as to make fine products, good discerning eyes are needed. – He thought.

– There's no need for you to become that sad.

– Master...

Eiji brushed his head gently.

Pietro was a hardworking disciple. Until now, he had been giving his best.

Even if it was just to learn a little bit more, he would question what he didn't understand with a positive attitude. Pietro would observe Eiji's working mannerisms and try to steal them.

- To begin with, it's not possible to improve one's smithing skills instantly. Since it was me who was trying to force the growth on you, don't fret.
- But, I want to grow into a fine blacksmith quickly....
- What's important is to do everything step by step. You can't omit too many steps, otherwise you will trip up and fail.

Pietro, whose eyes were upturned, turned red on his face.

During Eiji's first year of smithing, he was unable to do things like crafting arrowheads by himself.

Perhaps Pietro's work couldn't be let off, however, more than just completing a product, it was important to yield a certain result.

It ought to be done with self-confidence.

- If you fail to make 10 of them, it's fine to reduce them to 9 the next time. Can you do it?
- Yes!

It was answer worthy of praise.

Eiji thought that he was indeed blessed with a fine disciple.

There are things like fate in relationships between humans.

That's why having a good disciple wasn't something one could obtain by simply wishing.

Eiji thanked to the god of smithing for bestowing him this good chance.

- How's Master's job progressing?
- Well, it's going favorably. It took me 2 attempts, you see.
- As expected of Master.
- Everyone should be able to do it as long as that person polishes his skills for almost 10 years.
- Is that so? My father and other people seem to use the same hoe, however, their field plowing methods are completely different.
- Yeah, that's right. Even if they carry out the same work, it's all about whether they can do it skilfully or not.
- What makes the difference?
- It's a rather difficult question to answer. Wouldn't you say that it's usually about figuring out by yourself...?
- Figuring out?

- Like answering yourself ‘how to reduce the resistance and the power input when digging the soil using a hoe?’. Those who will consider the problems that way will certainly improve themselves.
- Master is like that as well?
- Yea, I do tend to think in that manner. Like ‘how I can make it more skillfully’? That’s why, Pietro, you too should reason that way. The next thing for you would be ‘Can I make the next 11 or more of these things better?’
- Understood.
- Right, then redo the arrowheads.

Eiji watched with gentle eyes how his disciple clenches his fist while being fully motivated.

Pietro was a person with sincerity, endeavor, and spirit.
Certainly, he will become a fine laborer one day.

If possible, I’d like to tag along and observe his growth – Eiji thought.
Later, restless sounds coming from the workshop wouldn’t cease for a while.

Since then, a few days had passed.

Just as Eiji instructed, the women’s camp strived to maintain a dry river bed. Fernando continued to tackle problems from time to time.
Having some spare time, Eiji completed the bearing with the use of an iron plate.

Inside the dry river bed, there were 3 carts loaded with materials.

Standing on the dry river bed, Eiji gazed at the actual place.
His expression was filled with admiration and surprise.

To think that they would manage to do this much.....

The river water was splendidly stopped.

Stones in various sizes were piled up together, and the gaps between them were blocked and dried with clay.

It looked as though the upper part of the river was covered with a huge wooden plank, creating a small dam that halted the water.
The foundation, on which the watermill was to be built, was leveled and made from stone.

On top of it, another massive base made from wood was set up.

– Oh my, actually, I wished for this, but I wouldn't have thought for them to do their job this neatly.

– Hey.

– Eh, what's the matter?

– Did they overdo?

– Ah, Fernando-san, that's not what I meant. I mean, this base, wasn't it done brilliantly?

– Well, I guess this much should be normal for the women in our village, since they tend to do lots of engineering works.

While laughing, Fernando carried out the lumber.

He was about to cut all the materials and assemble them together on the spot. Fernando planned to finish all the works within a single day.

– Well then, Fernando-san, today I'll leave the instructing to you.

– Yeah, count on me. Not just instructing the people, I'm going to show them how to operate with a hammer.

– Well then, Fernando-san, today I'll leave the instructing to you.

– Yeah, count on me. Not just instructing the people, I'm going to show them how to operate a hammer.

– Do you think that you will look cool with that?

– Y-Yeah.....

– Well then, let's do our best today as well!

– Hey, don't ignore me, damn it! I too was wondering about that myself!

The construction of the watermill began.

The watermill was to be mostly made of wood materials.

Drilling holes in every part, they planned to fix them by passing through the holes.

Because the objects were massive, they needed a large number of people to put them together.

– This, won't come inside, will it?

– If you strike with the wooden mallet, you will be able to.

– Why do you want to attach this plank on the slope?

– That way, the watermill will be able to catch more water, and thus,

generate more power.

– Heh? You're saying some strange things.

For a while, the same procedure was repeated.

Eiji thought that the women's camp was working quite efficiently.

Attaching the bottom board and rim joists to the water wheel, then fixing them with a tenon.

Using a pole, called a 'joining beam', they planned to connect the water wheel and the watermill bearing.

knock knock- the wooden mallet continued hit on one part after another.

The operation began from the morning, through the noon, and concluded in the evening.

During that time, the women in charge of the work didn't utter a single complaint.

While chatting idly, they moved their hands certainly.

Was it because of this world's cruel condition? All of the women in this village were workaholics with great perseverance.

– This labor is a muscle pain without doubt.

– Well, but with that, the work will be completed.

– I wonder how much it will ease our labor.

Everyone's voices were deeply moved despite saying 'so tired'.

The completed watermill was big.

It was 4m in diameter, and it was high as if looking up.

Looking from close range, it gave a powerful aura.

Together with Fernando and Pietro, Eiji lifted up the finished water wheel.

The wheel was heavy, and its wood was biting into their shoulders.

Stopping their breath, they focused power into their thighs and pushed up with their hands.

– Here we go!

– One, two... go!

Thunk – together with the sound, the water wheel was inserted into its pedestal.

- It's... finished!
- Yay!
- Hey, somebody pull the chain and stream the water.
- I'll do it!

As soon as Pietro pulled the chain, the wooden plank that dammed the water was lifted up. The water flew in.

At first, there was not much coming in, but immediately after that, the water started to fill up while flowing past the ditch made from stone at once.

Creak creak – a dull sound generated and the watermill began to move as it started to rotate with a great force.

Even in Eiji's workshop, it was a sound commonly heard.

- Oh! Amazing!
- Isn't this something you see every day, Pietro?
- No, but, I'm only use to seeing the watermill and not this.
- Well, since it's outside the workshop, you've to go the back in order to see it?
- Still, this one is much bigger than the one in our workshop.
- That's because the one in the workshop is a top-level type one, which can easily generate power.

In front of the water wheel's bearing there was a shaft, and before it, a wooden mallet was furnished.

A pedestal that was set below the hammer generated knocking sounds as it struck against the hammer.

- Oh, can we perform tanning with this?
- With this we can dust the wheat straw and hemp, right? Isn't it nice?
- Isn't it fine to make felt using this?
- I, will bring the materials! It will be a waste if we don't try it out after all the effort.

The villagers that witnessed how the mallet works, run out following one after another even though Eiji thought that only one would go.

The ones that remained were Eiji, Pietro, and Fernando.

- What's that? Isn't the watermill amazingly popular?

- I too, wouldn't have thought for it to receive such a response.
- To think that it would be recognized to such an extent-su.^[1]

Under the sky which was turning into the evening one, Fernando and Pietro looked dumbfounded.

My face probably looks the same – Eiji thought.

There was no doubt that the watermill will become their main source of power from now on.

However, not even Eiji would think that it will receive this much favorable support.

Since the villagers were a bit more familiar with manual work, besides the watermill's merits, Eiji also thought that the transition from one lifestyle to another would be troublesome for them.

With that, it seemed that it was just a matter of time before more watermills will be approved and built from now on.

Lots of equipment that Eiji could come up with gathered inside his head.

As soon as he focuses on his core business that is smithing, he will probably be able to produce even more than ever.

The development of the village was essential; nevertheless, as expected, he was still a blacksmith.

Eiji decided that he would suggest for himself to focus on smithing during the next assembly of executives.

The sun began to set and with that they decided to announce the completion of the construction project.

Making Pietro return back to his home, Eiji, together with Fernando, moved toward the tribal chief's house.

On their way, they both talked to each other about improvements that need to be taken from now on.

A blacksmith and a carpenter, the things that they had to do were piling up.

They were piling up just like the number of stories one could tell.

- Speaking of which, I've heard that you and Tanya are expecting a child.

– Yes, it seems so. I'm already looking forward to its birth. Whenever I go back home, I will think of nothing but whether I should have a bed or an easy chair made, or what toys will be the best for the child.

– Isn't it still too early for that?

Fernando, who made a wry smile, understood him as well; nonetheless, Eiji couldn't help the fact that he keeps thinking about it.

He couldn't help looking forward to his child's birth.

Wouldn't this be the same for one's own mother and father?

Eiji suddenly recalled his father living in the distant world.

He wondered whether his father was doing fine.

– By the way.

– What?

– What do you plan to do in the meantime?

– What exactly?

– By what I mean that. There are probably various things you're still bothered with.

– A-Ah, you mean about my intimate life?^[2]

And what Fernando's meant was....

Because Fernando usually tends to have a calm attitude, this time Eiji could feel something uncomfortable.

Without much of concern, Fernando continued to walk with his usual attitude.

– That's right. You might be troubled during the time of pregnancy.

– I'll endure.

– You can?

– Back then, we used to sleep together for several months without laying a hand on each other. That's more than enough.

– That's indeed amazing. If it was me, I'd definitely lay a hand. Saying that, you know that it's wrong to be unfaithful.

– I won't do that.

– Good for you, but know that those who commit such an immoral act will face the death sentence under the customs of this village.

– D-Death sentence?

– Yeah, like being tied up in ropes and throw into a swamp.

Imagining that, Eiji felt shivers to his bones.
Just how much one would suffer from being buried alive?

And not just that.

Since Eiji was completely unfamiliar with this village's customs, he had to pay even more attention to that from now on.

Till now, he had been living peacefully without worrying about things like this.

The only turmoil he had to go through was when he had to accept the match in Othello.

– C-Could it be that I broke a rule while being unaware of the customs?

– Don't worry. If you behave like you usually do, no problems will occur. Don't kill, steal, deceive, rape – if you abide by these rules, then whatever else happens, you will be forgiven as long you apologize.

– I-Is that so? If you notice anything odd in my behavior, please tell me, because, I still don't know anything.

– It should be fine even if you ask Tanya-chan in order to make sure of that, since there aren't that many severe regulations.

Hearing Fernando words, Eiji's heart felt at ease.

It seems that as long as he abides and live accordingly to the common sense of a modern person, he will be fine without committing any grave mistakes.

The house of the tribal chief appeared in their sight.

However, the atmosphere was different from usual.

– Eh? I wonder what's going on.

– I don't know. There seem to be 2 horse carriages. On top of that, one of them looks like the one I saw during the tax collection. I wonder what their business is at this time of the year.

– Somehow I've got a bad premonition.

– Ah, shall we watch the situation from a closer range?

In front of the house, there were 2 horse carriages standing next to each other.

They had probably just arrived.

The horses were tied to the carriages, standing there as if they had no place to stay.

Once they drew closer, a tall man came into their sight.

It was Franko, the tax collector.

A painful part of his memory woke inside Eiji's chest.

He remembered losing all the initiatives during their first negotiation.

In front of the horse carriage, a baldachin furnished with golden embroidery was put.

The embroidery had a motif showing an eagle gallantly spreading its wings.

Eiji and Fernando hid their presence as they drew closer.

A conversation carried by the wind was heard.

These were voices from the tribal chief, Bona, and Franko.

Bona's voice was sharp; nevertheless, Franko would receive it with a composed expression.

– You, for what purpose did you come at this time of the year?

– No, I thought about keeping the promise from the other day.

– A Promise?

– Yes, didn't you tell me to forward you some of my people? It was quite troublesome, you know. I had to convince the ruler in order to hand you the people.

It seemed that there was a discussion regarding this during the previous negotiations.

Eiji recalled back the memory.

Indeed, Bona made such a request as she refused to send Eiji to Franko's place.

Therefore, creating a condition in which they could pay undivided attention to development.

Currently, due to Eiji's contribution to the development, there's no doubt that he's had less time for smithing.

Saying that, did Franko really think that they would hand Eiji over?

– It's a promise, you see. That's why I brought you 5 people. With that, your work will progress, and I'll be able to collect more tax. Also, there will be more things you'll be able to do. Of course, the

people I've brought are only reserved for helping with smithing.

– Are you serious...?

Eiji could understand Bona's feeling of doubt.

What was Franko's hidden agenda this time?

Shouldn't he be delivering the tax revenue to his city?

Still, the matter of disciples was different. Allowing people from the other villages to enter a sacred place, such as a smithing workshop, could mean nothing good.

As expected, will he be able to welcome the new people gladly? Eiji became a little bit worried about that.

Franko was full of self-confidence.

He replied straightly with a clear, deep voice.

– As you can see, I'm always serious. Still, it seems like the village has become quite peculiar, hasn't it? That building, just when did you construct it?

–It was this winter.

– Hou hou, it's splendid. What's its purpose?

– It's meant to house the livestock.

Bona answered as if being annoyed.

Providing he keeps observing like this, there might be another tax increase.

However, it seemed that the time wasn't right yet.

– More importantly, if you intend to bring people, I'd rather have you tell me in advance. I too, need to make the right preparations for the welcoming, as well as arrange the spare rooms.

– I should have sent somebody ahead, still, you see, the people here have already traveled this distance, and it will be insecure to let them wander without any guide.

– Mike!

As if answering to Bona's voice, Mike went out from the house.

Mike's expression was stern. He glared at Franko without even trying to hide his hostility for him.

– The newly arrived people will be living here starting from today, so

guide them to a vacant house. There should be one in the southern part of the village.

– It's a place where a pack of people lived before. Once it's tidied up, it should be suitable for housing.

– Also, divide it between men and women.

– Understood.

– Oh my, taking care of the arrangements, you have my deepest gratitude. Everyone, please get along with each other from now on, okay?

Hearing the tax collector's words, each of the Siena village's members made a sullen face. Everyone could feel tension and chill rising in the air.

And then everyone could tell.

— That this moment will cause a riot.

Notes

1. Pietro's accent.

2. As I tried to look for some more info about the meaning behind "shita no hanashi" in a Japanese dictionary, I found that this term can be used for gender related talks, or vulgar ones. Not fully sure if this is what he meant though.

Credits

Author	(肥前文俊) Fumitoshi Hizen
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Illustrator	Three
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Translator	<u>Hachidori108</u>
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Book designer	<u>Armaell</u>
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